

# **The Positive Evolution of Religion**

# Orpheus

A General History of Religions

By Solomon Reinach

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# The Positive Evolution of Religion

Its Moral and Social Reactions

By

Frederic Harrison, D.C.L.

London

William Heinemann

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FREDERIC HARRISON



To

SHAPLAND HUGH SWINNY

“ET QUASI CURSORES VITÆ LAMPADA TRADUNT”

## NOTE

THIS book contains the substance of a series of public discourses given by me at different times at Newton Hall. It is dedicated to my successor, Mr S Hugh Swinny, who has been for the last ten years President of the Positivist Society and editor of the *Positivist Review*. The first four essays in this volume have never been published, the succeeding essays appeared in the *Positivist Review* June, 1911 to June, 1912.

Together they resume my final thoughts on the general problem of religion.

F. H.

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## INTRODUCTORY

*The new Faith when it comes will be of little worth unless it has been shaped by generations of honest and fearless men, and has found in those who are to receive it an honest and fearless temper. Our plea is not for a life of perverse disputings or busy proselytising, but only that we should look at one another with a clear and steadfast eye, and march forward along the paths we choose with firm step and erect front.*

*—John Morley on Compromise.*

IN now reducing to permanent form the teaching which for some years past I gave to our friends at Newton Hall, it must be understood that my survey of the long evolution of the religious spirit ineradicable in mankind was based upon the philosophical and religious system known as Positivism. The title of this volume implies as much. It is far from my purpose to attempt any general exposition of the system. I shall merely seek to form an estimate of various types of religion from a free and independent point of view.

The free and independent aspect from which I propose to test the Social and Moral reaction of the successive types of religion which have slowly built up modern civilisation is based on what claims to be a scien-

tific Philosophy, issuing forth into a moral and religious scheme—for the entire conduct of life: public and private, personal and social. It aims at a permanent harmony between Thought, Feeling, and Action. And its key-note is the need for some *SYNTHESIS*—i.e., for some organic unity, to weld into one common life our intellectual, our affective, and our active propensities. The anarchy and failures we see around us arise from this:—that our science is not inspired by religion, our religion is not founded on science, and our practical conduct is most imperfectly guided either by religion or by science. The paramount conception of Positivism is the *Synthesis*, or harmonising of all three sides of human life.

It is thus forced to take a wide range, and to deal with the entire history of Religion on a common scheme. And this forms the main difficulty which it has to encounter, and explains the antipathy it often arouses in the specialist schools of our day. Our age is one of Analysis,—of fissiparous research. The Positive scheme is a search for Synthesis—a combination of knowledge with sympathy and with action.

In dealing with objections, I shall group them into four leading classes and schools of thought. I shall seek to deal with these, not in the least in a combative spirit and in a dialectic tone—but solely to compare our theory with that of others, and merely in order to throw light on our own. Controversy for the sake of victory is as useless as it is contemptible; but the progress of

religious and of philosophical truth has often been significantly advanced by the instrument of genuine controversy, where the only end in view was honest, respectful, and searching comparison of opinions. The groups will be:—

(1) The orthodox objections. The criticisms of the theological schools proper, whether in the Catholic or Protestant forms; and therein we shall make clearer the contrast between *demonstration* and *revelation* as a basis for religion.

(2) The metaphysical objections. The criticisms of the deistical schools, which rest on Natural Theology rather than Revelation, and trust to ultimate intuitions in lieu of scientific demonstration

(3) The philosophical and literary objections. Criticisms from those who, rejecting both revelation and intuition as a basis for philosophy, oppose the idea of any general Synthesis.

(4) The scientific and agnostic objections. Criticism from the evolutionary, materialist, and secularist schools, and the contrast of Positivism with Ethical culture entirely devoid of any religious element.

These are four of the main classes of objections, and each of them is fairly entitled to be heard and to have a plain reply. There are certainly many other grounds of objection to our views, such as the individualist, the socialist, the democratic, the autocratic doctrines. There are the anarchic and democratic schools, the apostles of equality in the sexes in all functions of so-

ciety, and the doctrine of absolute rights inherent in each adult, and paramount to any social institution. But all of these, and many others of the same kind, may fairly be grouped under some of the religious or philosophical groups already mentioned. It will be found that a thorough examination of these four classes of objections and the counter statement of the Positive view on each head, will amount in effect to a summary of the intellectual principles on which the Religion of Humanity is built

The field so sketched forth is very wide; but it is impossible to give the slightest notion of Positivism as a system without touching on a wide field. Its claim to find some Synthesis of human life implies a field coextensive with life. But it causes a difficulty to those who take a first view, or a hasty view of the Positive aim. Such persons hear of it as a religious scheme, and they come down to a Hall, where they hear perhaps some Doctor of Medicine lecturing on the nervous system and the analysis of the Brain, or, it may be, they hear a Professor of history giving an account of Rousseau and the Jacobins in the French Revolution—and they go away saying, “What has this to do with Religion? This is what one expects in a Literary and Scientific Institute, but not in a Chapel!”

It may be, that they have heard of Positivism as a system of social organisation for the better arrangement of Industry, and they find us discussing the Laws of Thought, or the nature of the Soul, the relations be-

tween Life and Death, the spirit and the bodily organs—and they wonder what this has to do with economic and social facts

Again, they have heard of Positivism as a scheme of the philosophy of the sciences, and they find us discussing the economy of the Home, the education of the young and the functions in society of men and women, or, it may be, debating the Irish question, or the problem of China, of Egypt, of India, or of South Africa. They think that such political debates do not obtrude themselves on the scientific addresses at the Royal Society or the Royal Institution

The effect of this may be somewhat miscellaneous to those who do no more than take a casual and superficial glance at Positivism as a whole. But it is unavoidable—nay rather, it is the true force of our position. The central idea of Positivism is simply this—that, until our dominant convictions can be got into one plane with our deepest affections and also with our practical energies; until our most sacred emotions, whether in our homes or in the depths of the silent heart, have been correlated with our root beliefs and also with our noblest ambition,—that is, until one great object is ever present to intellect, heart, and energy—human life can never be sound, healthy, or harmoniously ordered.

They are wholly mistaken who take Positivism to be merely a novel mode of satisfying man's inherent craving for some object of Devotion—who think that its aim is to replace God by Humanity and to substitute



human saints for Christ—that it is only, as some jesters have fancied, an atheistical kind of Salvation Army. All that is mere ribaldry. The external acts of worship are to the rational Positivist secondary and variable convictions, and no scheme of heavenly and personal Salvation can have any analogy at all with a Synthesis of practical life.

Nor are they less mistaken who suppose that the end of Positivism is to clear up some philosophical conundrums, to tabulate the sciences to the satisfaction of learned specialists, to enable the public to classify the sciences, or to arrive at useful truths in a new and compendious way. It has really no bearing on competitive examinations, nor any relation to academic degrees. "*Not to know—but to act*" said the greatest of philosophers: and this is the practical motto of Positivism also.

And it would be quite as great an error to suppose Positivism to be in aim merely a new form of Socialism, or a mere social economy of any kind; that its business is to abolish any existing type of society and put in its place a brand-new society of its own, warranted to remedy all present evils and to found a social millennium. That may be the aim of Socialism in some of its various forms. But the cardinal idea of Positivism is that our existing social economy is the result of defective intellectual training, neglected moral and religious training, and anarchical habits of practical life. And that no new social economy is possible at all without an

organised philosophy, a reformed morality, and a paramount religion

Positivism indeed takes up each of these subjects in turn: spiritual, scientific, political, because its key-note is, that the cause of our perplexities is this habit of so many reformers to deal with man and with society partially, and in sections. They treat the organism—man, and the organism—society, as if men were nothing but brain, or nothing but feeling, or nothing but activity. They treat society as if its sole business were knowledge, or politics, or morality, or industry, or art, or worship. Hence all the political and social movements, the schemes for education, together with our actual forms of religion, are all of them partial, sectional, and incomplete: avowedly confined to one side of life. The current phases of religion limit themselves to announcing the will of God, or revealing the nature of the immortal soul, and the destiny that awaits it after death. The politics, the economics, the sciences of this world concern not “religion.” Accordingly, systems of philosophy group the sciences, but are silent about devotion, and eschew politics. And the economists and socialists, who agree in nothing else, agree in this:—that they look on man not as a thinking and loving being, but as a producing and consuming, a manufacturing and agricultural animal.

The ordinary modes of describing Positivism in a phrase are all of them more or less misleading. If we speak of it as a “philosophy,” we put aside its practical

and spiritual aim. If we regard it as a form of "moral socialism," we leave out of sight its philosophical basis, and its religious sanction. If we speak of it as a "religion," using that term in its colloquial sense, we fail to convey to the ordinary public the idea of that which Comte called "at once a philosophy and a policy," for it deals with Thought and Action.

*Religion*, in the hands of a Theology in its dotage, has acquired, by popular use, a meaning so narrow and so artificial, that those who for the first time hear of a Religion of Humanity receive for the most part a distorted idea of what it means. They are wont to imagine that Religion means some particular mode of adoring a supernatural but incomprehensible Being, and that to say prayers to a visible but impersonal human aggregate is a fantastic mummerly. Auguste Comte brought back religion to its old and true meaning—"the binding up of our ideas, affections, and energies into a common harmony of life." But, until men have learned or re-learned this essential meaning of the term, it is to little purpose that they are told to look on Positivism as a religion at all.

*Education* would be a more significant and precise phrase to use of Positivism, if we could purge *education* from its purely intellectual connotation, and took it to mean the training of the heart, of the emotions, of the character, of conduct, in public and in private, as well as the training of the understanding—if we could get rid of the pitiful superstition which limits the mean-

ing of education to the passing successfully a series of examinations

Positivism is at once—a scheme of Education, a form of Religion, a school of Philosophy, and a phase of Socialism. But the attempt to define it in terms of any one of these singly, as now understood, or to describe it as being essentially any one of these more than the rest, would be only to mislead. There is no royal road to its understanding. It cannot be put in a nutshell or analysed on a sheet of paper. It must grow into our conscience and sink into our conceptions by laborious study and slow degrees. Its strength lies in the correspondence of its parts, and its aptness to meet the most different conditions; to calm the conflict within man's composite nature and within our intricate society. It can only be set forth efficiently by presenting it in a great variety of contrasted aspects; and its power to enforce convictions on widely different minds resides not in any single effect that it produces—but in the convergence which it evolves out of heterogeneous and chaotic elements.

The analogies of biology are conclusive that the disorders of highly complex organisms are seldom to be met by simple and direct means, and are usually themselves of a most complex nature, having infinitely subtle and unexpected reactions of their own. But the complexity of man's spiritual, intellectual, and active faculties far exceeds that of his bodily organs, as the complexity of the social organism is infinitely greater than

that of the individual organism. The presumption is that the sectional treatment of any grave social problem must partake of the well-known quackery of any specific *nostrum*, that any real reconstruction of modern society, and the radical solution of any social problem of importance can be nothing but a long, gradual, and complex system of treatment, applying alike to the thought, the feeling, the activity of the society in question, inspiring all of these with a common spirit to the same end.

# The Positive Evolution of Religion



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## CHAPTER I

### ORTHODOX CRITICISM

It may surprise not a few, but it is certainly true that on general principles, in spirit, and in aim, the points of contact are far greater between Positivism and Orthodox Christianity than between Positivism and any other phase of religious or non-religious thought. There is more sympathy, more of common ground, and a closer analogy.

The intellectual basis is widely different, the logic is opposed, and its judgment upon matters of fact is entirely recast. But since the spiritual feeling which inspires Positivism and Christianity is essentially the same, since the moral and the social end of both are practically the same, the antagonism is less than with phases of belief which aim at being anti-orthodox and hardly call themselves *religion*. We mean the same thing as the Churches mean. Christianity, in ideal at least, can still be spoken of as a *religion*. Stunted and pallid as it has become in the more advanced modern societies, it is still strong enough to inspire some nobly religious lives; and it maintains yet great religious institutions, forces, and habits. Even in our public life, where its influence is least pure and least efficient, it maintains the spirit of charity, compassion, and loyalty.



## 2 THE POSITIVE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

And in personal and in domestic life, its influence is far more potent and of a higher order. It does comfort spirits in anguish, it does control passion, it does keep alive in millions of homes and in tens of millions of hearts, the flame of tenderness, purity, and self-sacrifice. Can this be said of any of the philosophies, of any of the socialisms, or of any of the secularisms? Their aim is to clear thought, to redress wrongs, or to abolish superstition: they do not pretend to purify, direct, inspire life. Christianity does: ethical religion does. Positivism does.

The religion of Humanity stands on the same ground as the religion of Christ—springs out of the same sources, works toward the same ends. It occupies the same ground, but not the same ground alone. Their bases do not coincide, though the base of the one covers that of the other. The conception of Humanity covers a ground far wider than even the Catholic Church or any Gospel Church ever covered in the zenith of their power. For it covers the whole field of Science, of Economics, of Politics, of Art, even of daily intercourse. It covers the whole range of human happiness, power, well-being, and enjoyment of life. It does not crush out earth in order to win Heaven, nor starve our life in the body for the sake of a life in Paradise. But it seeks to bring Heaven nearer to earth, and to win a Crown of Glory for the life which we know and see. The salvation of Man is the end common to both these forms of religion, as it must be to any religion.

Most of us who advocate this cause have come out from some of the Christian churches. Almost every one of those who have sought to propagate in England the belief in Humanity has come from devout homes, and of religious families. For nearly all of us, our childhood and youth were filled with memories and associations of the Christian world, with active devotion to the gospel of Christ in one of the orthodox communions, Anglican, Evangelical, Ritualist, Catholic, or Methodist. I could name but very few active Positivists in England, to whom, up to years of maturity, the Gospel was not a real and living power. If I may speak of myself I can look back in memory to the time when I took part with entire sincerity in the communion of the Church of England in which I was carefully and zealously trained; and I fully entered into that sense of personal relation to God and to Christ which the sacraments and the services of the Church inspire.

I am not conscious of any break in spiritual life as I look back on that. I have never felt any abrupt revolution in the religious conscience. And in passing from allegiance to Christ to allegiance to Humanity, I have never known the sense of spiritual conflict within, or of doubt, of abandonment, of despair, of desertion. I can recall nothing but an impression of very gradual, quite peaceful, and almost unconscious evolution of mind, a happy widening of sympathy and deepening of interest and zest in life. I still believe that I am seeking the same end, am filled with the same heart, and am inspired

by the same order of spiritual influences, as when I took my first Communion as a boy, with a mental attitude not far removed from belief in the Real Presence.

Seeking the same end now, do I say,—inspired with the same spiritual influences—full of the same hopes? Rather with much clearer, wider, more abiding influences. The Real Presence of Humanity needs no imaginative ecstasy to reveal it: it is in every beautiful word and deed around us. Every great dedication of one's life to good is a Sacrament, every great life is an Incarnation, every great thought is a Revelation; every saint is a Son of Man, every hero is our Lord; every perfect woman is our Lady and our Holy Mother.

A mind in the positive stage of faith feels the orthodox conception of religion to be jejune, artificial, as well as visionary. But it does not feel any direct antagonism towards it. It seeks to include, clarify, and give stamina to these vague and beautiful aspirations; to place these eternal sentiments of piety, veneration, and self-sacrifice on a rational and solid footing. It does not doubt their supreme beauty, their innate affinity with human nature, and their paramount power over human life. It looks not for the death, but for a resurrection of the religious spirit, that it may endow it with a new realm.

I am not at all afraid of these admissions; nor am I concerned if they are hard sayings to Secularists, Agnostics, and Materialists. We find them often turn aside saying—"Ah! this is only a new form of the old

superstition!" Well!—the limits of superstition are matters of science and of logic. And proof is wanting that reverence and gratitude for that Power which exercises a providential care over our lives, are false and degrading sentiments. If the influence of the Social Organism over individual man is without scientific evidence, there may be superstition. But if we have this evidence, then it is superstition to suppress all sense of gratitude and respect for the Social Organism on which we depend and in which our lives by inevitable laws are incorporate.

Wide as the gulf appears to be which separates the belief in Humanity from the Orthodox creeds, the many points of sympathy are constantly bringing us together. We feel it: they feel it. We have never doubted it, and are always ready to show it. They are coming to acknowledge it, as they know us better, however small may be our numbers, and however feeble our resources in all that can command attention for a nascent idea. One of the most eminent chiefs of the Catholic Church had carefully studied the Faith in Humanity—which he was wont to call it—as a body of noble proportions and great dignity, from which the head had been violently cut off. We replied that it was not the head that had been cut off—but merely the artificial and quite ceremonial head-dress or crown. The discrowned head is now more noble than ever. And so, one of the most learned divines in the Church of England was wont to say that he had learned more about the fundamental

meaning of Religion from Auguste Comte than from any uninspired writer. These things are trifles, which but illustrate the general position, that the conception taken by Positivists as to the nature, the functions, and the importance of Religion is entirely in accordance with the conception of it taken by the most thoughtful minds in the orthodox folds. The conception is the same; but it has been enlarged, made definite, and ennobled by the consummate analysis of Auguste Comte—one of the most wonderful achievements of abstract philosophy in the whole history of human thought.

We shall certainly not minimise the vast difference between a scheme which has God, as its centre, Heaven as its sphere, and Revelation as its foundation, and a scheme which has its centre in Humanity, its sphere on Earth, and its base in Science. The agreement is that of aim, social purpose, spiritual institutions, analogous methods of training, and similar types of veneration. Let us compare some of the more important

Both Positivists and the Orthodox hold that the most important force in human life is the abiding sense of a dominant and beneficent Power over us, to whom all our acts can be referred, to whom we continually turn for help, and to whom our entire lives can be dedicated. Both hold that the sense of this omnipresent Power can be cultivated, that individual consciences can be trained in it, till it becomes a second nature; that by organised institutions communities of men, both great and small, can be infused with it, and controlled by it. Both be-

lieve that the old religious spirit of the world is a thing not to be parted from, but to be cultivated, that the time-honoured habits of devotion, of personal renunciation, and of brotherly communion through a common belief, are destined to grow and develop with increasing civilisation and are not the crude instincts of untutored men.

Again, both agree in the need for a spiritual society distinct from the political or economic society—something that may be called a *Church*, having its spiritual authority quite apart from the magistrate, and its work in the spiritual life as distinct from the practical world of Industry or the duties of City, Commonwealth or Nation. Both insist that this spiritual communion, or *Church*, should have its spiritual institutions, its teachers, its schools, its temples and ceremonies, its own scheme of training both for private and for public life. Both agree that the great epochs of life, birth, adolescence, marriage, death, consecration of the dead, should be marked by appropriate acts of a public and formal kind and should be consecrated by spiritual acceptance.

Lastly, both insist that the Soul of man (in the sense of the inmost hopes, beliefs, and yearnings of the heart) must be stimulated by constant appeals and by every instrument that can awaken conscience. And especially that the profound meaning of Death, and all that it implies in the individual, in the family, and in the commonwealth, must be organised as an education of the

Heart as well as of the Brain, and that this Life beyond Death is the very essence of our whole religious training

Orthodox Christianity and Positivism are on the same ground in these things—understanding them differently in an intellectual sense, but not using them differently in the spiritual sense. But they go much farther together. For, whilst many of the vaguer forms of Deism would accept these conditions of Religion in a loose and fluid form, the Churches and the Positivist faith decline to leave any of these conditions undefined, nor can they authorise the individual conscience to work them out in practice for itself. Churchmen and Positivists accept formal institutions, with exact functions, they seek to form regular habits, a clear body of doctrine, and a recognised mode of moral culture.

Now no other system or current school of thought which is outside the orthodox Churches would admit for an instant any such thing. Theism, Pantheism, Agnosticism, Evolutionism, Secularism, repudiate every thing of the kind. The Unknowable, the Infinite Differentiations, the God-in-all-things, the Know-nothings, the Eternal-not-ourselves-that-makes-for righteousness—all of these utterly reject both spiritual authority and religious doctrines. Hence, in spite of disclaimers and of differences, the Orthodox and the Positivist conception of religion stand on the same plane. The orthodox can never displace us, even if they wished, from our ground thereon. And we Positivists shall continue to

come, as we have done from the first, from out some of the many extant forms of practical Christianity; and so we will hope to strengthen ourselves, when in doubt and difficulty, by recurring to the mighty traditions of the Christian world

Whence then come the aversion, the horror, and indignation, felt by many clear minds and generous hearts within the orthodox camp, when they distinctly realise the Positivist position? They do not long rest in the objection (sometimes felt in the first moments of astonishment) that Positivism shuts off all sense of spiritual life, is mechanical, purely intellectual, a mere appeal to reason, a series of negations, a paralysing of the higher nature, and the like stock phrases of the pulpit. They soon learn that all spiritual hopes and thoughts are open to the Positivist in a new and larger faith; that it includes, without destroying, the religious aspirations of the devout Christian or of the devout Theist.

No! the real antagonism arises from this—that they lose what they have been taught to believe to be essential to religion, these three:

1. An Almighty, Absolute, Incomprehensible God,
2. A scheme of Personal Salvation, or union of the Soul with God,
3. A Revelation which unites God and Man.

They must have, to fulfil their idea of religion, a Supreme Creator and Ruler of the Universe; the incorporation of the individual spirit into this transcendental



sphere, and a direct interposition from the Almighty to effect this apotheosis of man. They accept no Providence short of this mystical Infinity and Incomprehensibility, no Salvation less than the transcendental glorification to the individual soul, and no religious assurance outside of the Word of God, or the Voice of the Church.

The essence of the religion of Humanity is to place it upon a less sublime but more certain footing, and not to reject the substance whilst clutching the shadow. Its plea is this. Whilst such chaos of opinion exists as to the very meaning of this Infinite, Absolute, Supreme Being, over whose nature the theologies and the philosophies have disputed for two thousand years, now that the authority of Revelation is revolving in a whirlpool of controversy, let us at least acknowledge the human Providence, which however faulty and imperfect, is real, certain, intelligible, and useful. Philosophy and daily experience prove that in lifting our ideal of a guiding Power over man into the region of the Infinite Universe, and the sphere of Absolute Perfection, we are wandering into the mystical and even the inconceivable—a region of endless debate and self-deception. The result of piling up unintelligible phrases about an insoluble theorem, is that each man and woman conceives the Supreme in his and her own way, often in an evil and inhuman way, and always in some hyperbolic conventionalism, the true meaning of which to each is a matter of accident.

Positivism, neither denying nor affirming anything about the Origin of the Universe or the will of a Being assumed to be Absolute (*i.e.*, incomprehensible) presents the ideal of a Human Providence which for some fifty thousand years or more has laboured, grown, and risen through endless failures up to better things, and which there is every reason to hope may go on raising man to a nobler life for a further remote and incalculable period of time.

Then, as to the mystical incorporation of a (supposed) indestructible human entity with a (supposed) transcendental glory, a scheme entirely personal from the moral point of view, as well as unintelligible from the logical side,—Positivism substitutes for Personal Salvation the practical religion of social duty, consecrated by final incorporation of our life in the body with the organic life of the great Social Being, of whose effective and beneficent power, each life must form a part. Salvation becomes co-operation during life with—and after death, incorporation into—the sum total of human civilisation. It is not Heaven, nor is its counterpart, Hell: but it is perfectly real, demonstrably certain as a fact, and adequate as a motive to a worthy life. It is childish to talk about Hallelujahs, thrones, and crowns of gold.

Just so, as to the Revelation which is to unite the hypothetical Soul with the inconceivable Mystery, Positivism presents the demonstration of science and the sum total of a rational Philosophy. For centuries the Revelation of Church or Book has been losing authority

and the demonstrations of science have been gaining authority, until Revelation has grown to be incoherent and worthless to most trained minds and scientific demonstration is become the type of certainty. What Positivism calls on us to do is this. To replace the incoherent hypothesis by provable knowledge, to make science our Creed, in lieu of antiquated fables.

This is the true battle-field between Positivism and any form of orthodox faith. The alternative is this—A real providence or an incomprehensible Almighty—a social progress, in lieu of personal salvation—a scientific creed substituted for a hypothetical creed. This is the key of the problem. The difference is great, but perfectly intelligible. The issue must be decided by the general cast of the mind, and the entire mental and moral attitude of each person.

I. Let us take in turn each branch of this great alternative and begin with the first:—*A real Providence or an Incomprehensible Almighty*. We often hear one saying—"I would not care for any kind of Providence, "if I did not feel it to be Infinite, Almighty, Absolute, "co-extensive with the Universe, and not measurable "by man's intellect and conscience. The idea of creation and its Supreme Ruler can never be silenced. "Men can never feel reverence for any Power, however "real and present, if it be less than Almighty, Infinite "and Perfect." Such is the ordinary language of the pulpit.

Well! this is a matter of experience, of observation,

of fact. Such is not the teaching of history, or even of common knowledge. On the contrary, we know that in vast periods of human life, as even to-day with many sound minds, these vast insoluble problems were left aside. A practical, wholesome, philosophical habit of mind turns from them as from idle exercises of ingenuity and curiosity. There are plenty of such conundrums—the origin of evil, the doctrine of liberty and necessity, the origin of human society, the geometric form of the universe, the universal application throughout space of the primary laws of mathematics and of logic—all these historic problems cease to interest solid minds. They are not solved. they are not proved to be insoluble. they are not shown to be irrational. They are quietly dropped, as mere waste of time. To devote serious labour to them is the mark of an immature, untrained brain. In a society wherein these insolubilities are still conventionally admitted, where they still receive official solutions, it is decisive if even a small minority of superior men live worthy lives without such things. Earnest, practical natures gradually outlive a perpetual *Perhaps*.

Again—it is historic fact that some of the most powerful characters, some of the most permanent societies recorded, have been animated by dominant ideas—yet remain without a thought of Infinity or Creation. Consider the grand story of Rome for a thousand years, the great spirits of Greece, take the Egyptian hierarchies, the Indian, the Chinese empires, and many others.

There have been antique societies compared to which ours are of mushroom growth, which have subsisted for ages with elaborate religions, theologies, and moral codes, but without a thought about Infinity and Absolute Almighty.

It is strange that men imagine these ideas inseparable from organised religious life when they have been dominant only in Europe, and that for not more than ten or twelve centuries, out of hundreds of centuries.

Now, see the consequences of resting human life on this Infinity, these transcendental ideals!

All modern philosophy concurs to show that when we pass into the region of the Absolute, proof is impossible, and logic disappears, because proof and logic imply the Relative. And if proof is impossible, then agreement, permanence, rest in convictions, are impossible also.

The movement of the Solar System now rests on irrefragable scientific proof and rigorous logic. Though it is hardly two centuries old, it seems likely to last as long as any human certainty remains. The origin of life by gradual evolution of germs, though not a century old, is hardly less settled as a matter of proof and of established belief.

But about Creation—how to reconcile Infinite Wisdom and Goodness with the facts of life, how to reconcile Law and Deity, the Evolution of Nature with the Perfection of the Creator—men still go on disputing, doubting, arguing, now more fiercely than ever, with no

facts, with no possible facts, with no scientific evidence, or with sham scientific evidence, perpetually guessing, trying new answers to the puzzle, never satisfied, never agreeing, never convinced. rolling up the weary stone, like the condemned spirit, in Tartarus, to see it roll down before it reaches the top of the hill

And yet, it is this very element of uncertainty, of hypothesis, *i.e.* of *guessing*, which the orthodox declare to be the essence of religion—and this means the dominant inspiration of human life. Can *guessing* be the foundation and centre of Religion? Let us consider the consequences of pinning the very existence of human society on to this basis of Figgment. If not Figgment, it is endless Doubt.

If nothing can be religion but this hypothetical, superhuman, extra-terrestrial, preternatural creed, this follows. The creed is detached from life, fact, truth, and civilisation. In the days of Christ and of Paul, of St. Augustine and St. Bernard, Luther and Calvin, nay even as late as the day of Bossuet and Fénelon, George Fox and Ken, of Wesley and Whitefield, or rather in the churches they led, the habits of mind of the intrained masses were in this stage of thought, when it readily acquiesces in fictions and hypotheses. It did not seem ludicrous to the people to tell them that a plague was the sign of God's wrath, and that a time of rebellion or of tyranny was God's judgment upon sin.

All that is now impossible. It is an undeniable fact

—it is part of civilisation itself—that our scientific conception of law, proof, experiment, cause and effect, conquers one field after another. And it is also an undeniable fact of civilisation that the brotherhood of man is becoming a more real and definite idea, and that the moral and social progress of mankind is continually becoming a more fruitful and practical force. And thus, a superhuman and transcendental creed is being constantly pushed further and further away from practical things and the realm of solid knowledge, so that a religion of God and of Heaven has now almost nothing to say about nineteen-twentieths of all that makes up human life.

Ask an ordained priest or a devout believer in one of the Churches what is the will of God as to the power of Trades-Unions, or the place of the drama in art, ask him what Holy Writ teaches as to the law of Population, or the evolution of the species, ask him what his Church teaches on the Irish question, or the South African problem, or on some social matter such as the Eight Hours day, or women's factory work, or female suffrage—or even ask him what is the revealed will of the Almighty on such a crucial question as primary education—what on these things is the Imitation of Christ, the Holy Living and Dying,—and he will be scandalised, will turn away saying, “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's!”

Ah! but Cæsar's things are exactly the things that

men need to know, and wherein they crave to have guidance. God's things belong to a hypothetical world in a problematical and distant future. Human life is made up of human questions, of these daily dilemmas: and a religion which has nothing to tell about them, and which is scandalised when consulted about them, cannot be a religion for human life. It may be sublime, infinite, and intensely spiritual. But this sublimity carries it out of human life. When any one attempts to bridge the gulf between Absolute Goodness, and any real social problem, the result is any crude opinion that satisfies the particular speaker, as when a priest considers himself commissioned from on high to denounce Secular schools or to defend the divine institution of some Episcopal Church.

In days of old this could be done in a measure; for it was quite sincere, and was sanctioned by public opinion and social acceptance. St. Bernard and St. Louis, Alfred and Godfrey of Bouillon, really believed themselves to be directed by God's will, and their followers received their judgment as that of a heavenly inspiration. In a crude, unreasoning way, the masses quite accepted the idea of applying this preternatural and transcendental ideal to the whole region of *thought* and of *action*, as well as of *feeling*. In our day this is impossible. It could not be done sincerely, except by some coarse fanatic, and the assumption of such authority is fiercely resented by the public. The result is that all reasonable and sincere believers think it essential to



piety and pure religion to restrict what they call their "devotions" to one abstract form of feeling, they are very careful that it should not intrude on any "worldly" (*i.e., real and human*) matter. They wrap up their "religion" in a napkin, as if it were the sacramental cup, and they bury it in the secret chamber of their pious communings of heart, or keep it locked up in the strong room of Church and Chapel, and take it out for a few hours on Sunday.

These three things (to take no others), the advance of scientific knowledge, the moral progress of civilisation, the sense of brotherhood in man, have cut the ground from under the conception of a Transcendent Absolute Being, and super-terrestrial life. The vast spiritual fabric is now left hanging in the air, without any firm base. Man's whole life now has to do with the real, the natural, the provable, the useful, the social, the humane. And so, a religion with its whole sphere in the supernatural, has ceased to interest the masses, has lost its power with most men of action, and nearly all men of science.

Thus the objection of the orthodox that Positivism has no place for these Absolute ideals and celestial hopes, becomes no objection at all. On the contrary, it opens on the Orthodox a terrible dilemma—the old objection that Aristotle hurled at Plato, that his doctrine of Ideas was sublime, subtle, magnificent,—but unpractical and useless.

Theologians such as that noble spirit whom I knew

and honoured, F D. Maurice, in vain seem to escape from the dilemma by repeating—"Theology has no quarrel with Science there is room for both!" Vain hope! Theology does not come into conflict with Science whilst it remains in Heaven, in a hypothetical sphere But the instant it descends to earth, and meddles in human concerns, it comes into inevitable conflict with science, and the dispute is irreconcilable Science appeals to man to direct his life by proof, observation, natural knowledge, and social philosophy Theology appeals to man to direct his life by hypothesis, supernatural hopes, and revelation which is now recognised as spurious or apocryphal

Religion must remain a more or less sentimental dream unless it can affect real life and cause men to do practical things in a given way But, when it ventures on this field, it finds science, in the widest sense of the term, in full possession of the ground, and resolute to exclude any interloper with a pseudo-scientific doctrine. Demonstrable science and rational philosophy now claim to rule all man's acts so far as they concern life on this earth. They leave unclaimed the sphere of day-dreams: and here Theology is at home. But they suffer no joint sovereignty in the domain of life and practical conduct.

When theologians say that Theology has no quarrel with science, they are usually thinking of Astronomy, Physics, Geology and Chemistry They forget, or they deny, that Science now claims as its own the great



own sphere, the whole world of man's moral and social life is closed to Theology. If it agree with moral and social science, it is not needed: if it contradict moral and social science, it is false. Science, that is real knowledge, based on the logic of demonstration, rules throughout the whole region of man's knowledge, throughout the sphere of civilisation, character, and moral conduct. Supernatural Theology, pushed out to its celestial realm, wanders about making aimless raids on some unguarded corner of real science. It suffers the restlessness and irritation of exile. Like every dispossessed dynasty, it becomes a source of constant disturbance.

## CHAPTER II

### ORTHODOX CRITICISM CONTINUED

II. It is one of the most familiar objections to the religion of Humanity that it robs man of any hope of existence after death and destroys all the moral value of the spiritual incorporation of the individual with the Supreme Goodness that is eternal. It takes away Heaven and Hell, and thus exposes moral conduct and the peace of society to all the lawlessness of personal caprice. By dragging down mankind to the level of the beasts that perish, it destroys the sanctions of morality and the motives which lead to virtue and to vice. The charge is founded on mere misconception; but it is necessary to consider the assertion that the hope of personal salvation and the fear of personal damnation is the only sure basis for effective religion.

Keen controversialists like Mr Goldwin Smith and Sir James F. Stephen have expatiated with great energy on the position that morality cannot long be maintained, if a practical belief in the rewards of Heaven and the pains of Hell, should ever be weakened. And like Gibbon's magistrate in the Decline of Rome, they seem more impressed with its social usefulness than with its spiritual beauty, or its intellectual truth. Rewards and punishments are not much in favour as great moralising engines. And we hear more

of their potency from lay controversialists than from the higher teachers of religion and the more spiritual schools of thought

To begin with—Positivists do nothing to take away this belief in rewards and punishments. They have neither desire nor occasion to discredit the ideas of Heaven and Hell. These ideas are going by no act of ours. The progress of scientific psychology, of social morality, even of right feeling and good sense have made Heaven a fairy-tale and Hell mere *brutum fulmen*. Practical men find little but what is sentimental in the one, and little but what is grotesque in the other. Heaven does not attract. Hell does not terrify the modern man. Masses of mankind give neither of them a thought; they have ceased to be in touch with real life. They are, too, like the Giants Pope and Pagan in the "Pilgrim's Progress," who have ceased to trouble the modern pilgrim in his course. Where the ideas are retained, it is as respectable conventions, or under a complete transformation, which has robbed Heaven of its glory and Hell of its fire.

It is familiar experience that the last generation has witnessed an almost total dying down of Hell fire as a great religious force. All the nobler spirits in the Churches, Catholic or Protestant, are silently extinguishing its last embers. Tender-hearted priests can hardly bring themselves to pronounce the frightful comminations of the Athanasian creed, and few devout

Christians really insist on them and enjoy them. Hell repels the believer as much as it amuses the sceptic, so that it is hardly good taste any longer to impute to a Christian belief in one of the cardinal doctrines of the creeds. The best exponents of orthodoxy glide over the subject of damnation with allusive or extenuating circumlocution, and they leave the old doctrine in its crudities to the coarser purveyors of spiritual stimulants. Compare the language of modern preachers, whether Catholic or Evangelical, with the language of the Church Fathers, of Calvin and Latimer, Bunyan or Defoe. The frank and horrible torments which were a leading part of Christian art from Dante to Michael Angelo, and even down to Milton, have become now little more than antiquarian curiosity. It is in vain to contend that morality cannot be maintained without future torments, when the orthodox Churches themselves put future torments into a figurative or subjective sense. Hell may be formally retained in the creeds, but it is no longer an instrument of religion. We never hear a Churchman warn a public tyrant, or one who is oppressing his neighbour, or a notorious sensualist, that he is in danger of the bottomless pit, where the worm dieth not, etc., etc.; and if certain crimes and vices are in general terms condemned from the pulpit, we are merely told that in a future life the victims of these passions will be filled with horror and remorse.

Now, Hell is really an inseparable part of the Chris-

tian scheme It is indispensable in any view of personal salvation in a future life. If the most atrocious crimes or the foulest self-indulgence upon earth are to be followed in any case by an eternity of life without punishment and without suffering at all, it would indeed be a perilous concession to self-interest and depravity. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow—we may pass into life eternal, where we shall be comfortable, if not happy, evermore"—sounds a strange maxim for the religious moralist If evil life on earth is to involve some mitigated suffering in the world to come, we may well ask what kind of suffering, who has described it, and on what authority is it decreed? Hell torment has the authority of Scripture and of the Church. Neither has ever transformed torment into moral feeling, or substituted remorse for consuming fire There is an orthodox view of future punishment by eternal agony, and an orthodox authority for believing it There is no orthodox doctrine of extenuating circumstances, and no orthodox authority for admitting them. The Churches have in practice dropped Hell-fire because they know it to be obsolete, repulsive, even ludicrous, and degrading to their own ideal of Divine Goodness. But to drop Hell-fire is to drop the moral potency of Future Life.

Not only have the best spirits of the Churches improved away Hell, but they have improved away Heaven We hear nothing of the gorgeous but somewhat material fancies of the poet of the Apocalypse.



There is scriptural and Church authority for jewels, crowns, and music, but none for the subjective Heaven of the modern pulpit. Heaven is now very different from what it was to the followers of Mahomet, or to the Christian martyrs, to the Ironsides or to Bunyan, to the Quakers and the Methodists. As we hear it now described by the purest teachers in the higher regions of Orthodoxy, it is no longer a gross tangible personal enjoyment of delightful sights, sounds, and sensations, but it is become the Heaven of a good conscience, joy over the triumph of good, of spiritual fellowship with noble souls. It is idealised away till it has become mere interest in the well-being of our fellow creatures—for which there is no trace of orthodox authority, or even tradition.

But all this is very much like the social and subjective future which is a cardinal point in the Positivist scheme of moral and religious life. Our Heaven is the sense of achievement of social duty, and final incorporation with the triumphant communion of our fellow-men. We are to live in the greater human future, in the glory of which our single lives form indestructible units. And we find the best Christians around us purifying their ancient creeds of a personal admission to glory and transforming it into a refined sense of social aspiration and sympathy. All that we do is to carry out their spirit to its legitimate results. We accept their idea and make it complete. Personal salvation in a visible, and sensible glory, is not then the highest dream of the

best spirits of to-day It is interpreted by them to mean a communion with the good and the just made perfect Hyperboles and hypotheses apart, that is simply what we mean ourselves

It is quite true that the Christian idea of personal salvation, refine it and spiritualise it how we will, is always supposed to be one of personal consciousness, indeed a sort of hyperæsthesia of consciousness, the keenest sensibility being intensified a thousandfold That is an assumption which the Positivist neither makes nor disputes, having no data to go by Those, to whom such a conviction is possible and soothing, must certainly be free to enjoy it But they who have grasped the more modern analysis of consciousness as a state of the nervous system, are at a loss to understand what this state can mean in the absence of nerves and corporeal system of any kind Emotion without organs is a thing of which none of us can have any experience; which to many of us is a thing that has no meaning. The difference between the orthodox and the Positivist conception of future good is one of philosophy and logic. From the moral and spiritual point of view there is a very distinct analogy Both look to the communion of the just—the one in a personal, the other in a social sense.

Now, what this personal view of future communion seems to gain in intensity, it obviously loses in purity. The moralists of the downright common-sense school who mock at any satisfaction short of a conscious state

of present enjoyment, make light of the moral dangers of concentrating the highest spiritual ideal on a state of present enjoyment. When they enlarge on the great things which have been inspired by hopes of personal salvation, they forget the selfish motive which is at the bottom of it. This selfish motive they stimulate rather than check. Their plan is to raise the noblest and most abiding of our emotions—the benevolent and beneficent instincts—by appealing to the lower, the least regular of our emotions—our self-love and self-interest. To constitute self-interest as the main-spring of religious life and the pole-star of moral conduct, perverts and introduces discord into the whole moral scheme. The great problem of morality, and indeed of religion, is to bring our violent instincts of self under the influence of our sanctifying instincts of social well-doing. And they propose to do this by holding out to self-love a sublime ideal of eternal bliss. It is a powerful engine, as was found by Mahomet, Peter the Hermit, Calvin, and Wesley—but it has its dark and dangerous side, and they are now universally recognised. Philosophers of the school of Bentham—content to rest their whole scheme of personal and social morality on the force of enlightened self-interest—will continue to argue for a conscious enjoyment of personal bliss as the essence of religion. A more spiritual type of religion is fully alive to its dangers.

In spite of all the efforts of the more spiritual minds of orthodoxy to neutralise these inherent evils of its

doctrine, these evils are continually bursting forth in the more excited forms of theological appeal and whenever the doctrine is pushed to its logical results. Nothing is a more favourite topic with the evangelical preacher than a picture of the spiritual communings of the creature with his Maker. We have religious tracts representing a mother almost rejoicing over a dying child, as she watches it in a sort of ecstasy passing into Paradise. We are familiar with the pulpit raptures about the utter detachment from life and its interests, about the spirit which is dead to the world around it and the men and women it contains, and which lives only in mystical union with a Being of Infinite Majesty, Wisdom and Perfection. We are familiar also with that darker side of the Christian pulpit, when it thunders against the blackness of the human heart, the innate vileness of the natural man, and the worm-like prostration of the miserable creature in the presence of Absolute Goodness.

This is the more ecstatic side of the orthodox doctrine. But it is a familiar form, and indeed the logical conclusion of the Athanasian creed. They tell us that it is the only possible basis for practical religion. To us it is charged with moral evil and social mischief. This vaunted spirituality is unreal, contrary to fact, unmanly, unjust to human nature, cynical, hysterical. Unnatural and spasmodic from the rational point of view, it is anti-social and brutalising from the human point of view. It feeds spiritual pride under pretence of humili-

ating temporal pride, it nurses vanity in the act of exhorting to humility, it ministers to self-love in the very words of preaching contrition, in the name of God, salvation, and glory, it makes exclusiveness a duty and finds the essence of religion in becoming inhuman. This is not to be spiritual—but to be self-righteous. This is not religion—but mysticism, and morbid excitement

This objection then of Orthodox Christians, that there can be no permanent morality, no spiritual religion, without a scheme of personal salvation, meaning thereby conscious enjoyment of individual bliss in an eternal heaven, brings them to a very awkward dilemma. This ideal of personal salvation plants in the very heart of religion itself an anti-human, a selfish, and immoral principle—a principle which has stamped on the history of all the Churches that record of cruelty, asceticism, and Pharisaism which stain their annals under one form or other, and which still abound amongst devout professors of all the stricter modes of orthodox theology.

Face to face with this orthodox creed stands the human ideal of religion. It finds a real and effective, though far from an almighty, Providence in the sum total of civilisation, now recognised by science as the social organism of collective Humanity. To serve this Providence, that is, to work consciously for its good and take part in its development on earth, is a practical religion of social duty. It is an enlarged and idealised form of patriotism, an imaginative and ardent form of

morality. Its religion fuses with the passion of devotion the true moral science, the essence of which is to maintain the supremacy of social over selfish aims. Its creed is the sum of provable knowledge, as accepted by competent minds, and as organised towards human progress. Its Heaven is the sense of a share in the general advance of mankind and in rendering back our own mite of help to the Providence to which we owe so much, but which cannot exist, work, or grow without our loyal service. The Hell which it offers to the incurably vicious and worthless is the hell of a bad conscience in having marred this good, wronged our benefactors, and repaid evil for good, and the consciousness that their very memory will be left behind as that of a disease, or incubus to the human race. Evil doers who have lost all practical fear of a mystical judgment to come, whilst the churches themselves have taught them to care little for the judgment of men, may yet come to fear the visible and present judgment to which an earthly communion will condemn them, so soon as belief in social realities shall have finally superseded conventional acquiescence in anti-social figments.

III. We may now turn to the third of the main points which Orthodox Christianity insists upon as essential to religion—Revelation to unite the creature with the Creator, be it in the form of venerated writings as in the Protestant, or the tradition left by Christ with the Church, as in the Catholic scheme. From the orthodox point of view, revelation in some form is essen-

tial. The gulf between Omniscience and the feeble creature of a day is so enormous that no correspondence between the will of God and that of man is conceivable without the direct interposition of Almighty Wisdom. The black heart, the imaginations of which are evil continually, cannot scale Heaven unaided nor do anything pleasing in the sight of the Supreme without due guidance and inspired teaching. Hence the scheme of Incarnation, Atonement, Gospel, and infallible Church. All this is strictly logical, nay, mathematically axiomatic. Given Absolute Perfection and Inconceivable Mystery on the one hand, and mere feebleness, vileness, and corruption on the other, a union of will, thought, and emotion, much less an ultimate incorporation or assimilation, are impossible, unless the Incorruptibility descends upon and inspires the corruption. The great reconciliation between the Good and the Evil is only conceivable by the agency of God's Word or Christ's Church.

It is the advantage of the Catholic communion that it can combine as the source of revelation both God's word and Christ's Church. This Church is itself a most elastic and comprehensive conception, embracing a vast body of patristic theology, a mass of tradition, and an organ of authority regarded as equally living and inspired. The multiform Protestant congregations pinned their revelation to the four corners of certain books in two dead languages, which were asserted to be the actual and literal words of the Almighty. For a time this

preposterous fiction held its ground—a fiction quite as bold as that of a miraculous Madonna or a Delphic oracle. Notwithstanding, for a century or two after the age of Luther and Calvin, Zwingli and Knox, the verbal inspiration of Scripture held paramount sway over certain races of Northern Europe. For a time it seemed that the Revelation of the Scripture was a firmer and more spiritual basis of religion than the Revelation by the Church. England, with its feudal, monarchical, and romantic traditions bound round her very roots, never assimilated thoroughly the Protestant ideal, and the founders of the English Reformation could not compare in moral or mental power with those of Germany, Switzerland, and Scotland. England developed that illogical and double-faced compromise known as the Church of England, in which the authority of Scripture was ingeniously tempered by a political version of a semi-Catholic Church.

We are now living to see how short-sighted was the policy of the English reformers. The Establishment which they thought to found on the Monarchy is now in the hands of any politician who commands a democratic majority; and officially the Church of England may be made to do and to teach anything ordered by a House of Commons which is not required to consist of Churchmen or even of Christians. As the Establishment is now at the mercy of political programmes, it cannot be said to have religious organisation or spiritual authority of any but conventional kinds. And English



Churchmen are left with no other source of spiritual guidance but the Scriptures—which never had for them the supreme and unique authority they possessed for genuine Biblical Protestants, men wont to reject with disdain Prayer-books, liturgies, sacraments, ceremonies, traditions, Councils, Bishops and Churches.

Not only does the Church of England see its ecclesiastical organisation and even existence become a mere “plank” in the platform of political parties, but it finds the alternative branch of its authority—the sacred Scriptures—in a perilous state of discredit. The Establishment never placed a supreme value on the Bible, for influential parties within the Establishment have always regarded the Book of Prayer, the Fathers, the early Councils, the Episcopate and Sacraments as of almost co-ordinate importance. And now, when almost everything but the Bible is gone as an authority, Churchmen, by virtue of their far deeper culture and superior knowledge of the world, perceive more clearly than any Evangelical Protestant, the extent to which the collapse of Biblical authority has already gone. Indeed Churchmen have themselves done as much as laymen to undermine that authority in the desperate hope of saving some nucleus of spiritual life out of the decayed matter.

Far stronger is the position of the Catholic Church. As the tremendous confusion brought about by the Protestant Reformation was primarily caused by corruption and vice within the Church itself, so a long series of splendid efforts after moral regeneration have restored

to the Church much of its cohesion and prestige. As its source of authority is most complex and elastic, it has been able to adapt itself to the growth of opinion, and to develop unexpected resources, in the absence of any rival power which is at once scientific and spiritual. Whilst all those who incline to a scientific attitude of mind are careless of spiritual forces, and whilst those who are zealous for spiritual ends are willing to place science in the background, the Catholic ideal will continue to command a powerful following. And assuredly, the Catholic Church is the only religious power in Christendom with any principle of vitality or prospect of future influence.

We never have made, and, I trust, we never shall make, any attack on the general principles of the Catholic Church. Those who accept them will not come near us, nor will they be influenced by anything we say or write. It would be idle to enter into anything remotely akin to criticism or controversy. But I would point out some analogies between the Positivist and the Catholic Synthesis. Our creed rests not on the living voice of the Church in the narrow sense, but on the living voice of Humanity as expressed in the best knowledge and the noblest thought of all ages. That voice is not "infallible," but where it is explicit and unanimous, it would be the part of a fool to gainsay it. This living voice does not speak only about things of worship and faith; but about all things that concern man and his dwelling-place. Our Scriptures are all utterances in-

spired by wisdom and purity, our Church is the assemblage of just and good spirits, our creeds are the proven conclusions of science. Our maxims are—Humanity—Certainty—Freedom—i.e., all human interests as the sphere of religion—demonstration as the basis of belief—liberty to think, learn, argue, and teach in place of orthodoxy. So understood, we can quite conceive the living voice of Humanity becoming the source of spiritual authority and religious life.

Nor is it necessary to say much about the Revelation of the Scriptures. We never engage in any of those minor, it may be those barren, controversies about the authenticity of this or that Scriptural book, the absurdity of this or that miracle, the preposterous gloss into which this or that passage has been twisted, the date, authorship, and credibility of this or that chronicle or epistle. These questions have their value and their uses, and for some special purpose from time to time we have treated them.

But the Sacred Books of the Christian are amongst the sacred books of the Positivist. In the fourth section of the *Positivist Library*, or selection of great and permanent literature, the fourth section being specially devoted to Religion, at its head stands the Bible, and with the Bible a full list of the great text-books of Christian theology. And so, in the *Positivist Calendar* are the authors both of the principal Jewish and the chief Gospel writings. The Bible is our bible quite as much as it is any Christian's. We look on it with re-

verence and love; we read it, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. We revere its authors, and we cherish its teaching. Of course, we put it in the same class as other spiritual books; we use it as we use them; we respect it as we do those; we find in it the same inspiration, the same authority, as we find in other great books, neither more nor less. We read it with the same caution, and we criticise it with like freedom.

But without entering into the date of the Synoptic Gospels, the number and meaning of the Apocalyptic Beast, or the diabolic perversity of the Gadarene swine, we cannot shut our eyes to the enormous accumulation of evidence, that what is traditionally called the Bible is a miscellany of pieces from two or three widely different literatures, of various ages, value, and authenticity, a *pot pourri* of folk-lore, popular songs, national traditions, poetry, and fiction, gradually pieced together and edited without any critical care:—so as to mix up the spurious and the genuine, the grotesque and the sublime in an indistinguishable mass. All that we really know is this:—that, except a few of the letters of Paul, and some invectives of the later preachers of Israel, hardly a single piece in the whole collection can be safely taken to be what it pretends to be, and not a single narrative can be trusted as a statement of fact. It is grand literature, not divine revelation.

Notwithstanding all this, the collection contains some sublime and noble teaching, is saturated with poetry and pathos, and contains the defaced relics of one of

the most glorious literatures of mankind. We love, revere, and use the book for its profound spiritual power, without forgetting its moral weaknesses and its literary corruption. We have no need to dilate on the grossness of the one and the imposture of the other. And we can only wonder that sincere, acute, and learned men can still be found to think of this dubious medley as the Word of God and the testimony to the Incarnation. If Revelation be really an indispensable foundation for true religion, we may indeed be thankful that we are not committed to a Revelation in which every day detects a new error or some pious fraud, and we may look forward to the time when the collapse of Biblical Inspiration will force many honest Protestants to take shelter in the vague pretensions of the Catholic Church.

Hitherto—we have been trying to meet the ordinary objections urged by Orthodox Christians, Catholic and Protestant, against the religion of Humanity. And these may be grouped under the three main heads. First, the Orthodox insist on an Absolute Creator and refuse to hear of a real but human Providence. Next, they will have nothing but a personal Heaven, and find no comfort in the progress and happiness of Humanity on earth. Lastly they insist on Divine Revelation, and are not content to rest on human knowledge and the inspiration of great thought. We have sought to combat these objections by retorting the objection and showing

how fraught with dangers are each of these contentions of theirs.

But after all—the value of a religious belief, earnestly held in the mind and honestly worked out in the life, is far greater than we should imagine if we only examined its creed—if we simply speculated *a priori* how it was likely to work. And to those who find rest and peace, and a foundation for right and contented living in any one of these orthodox churches—to them we would say—“We seek not to disturb your faith, to undervalue your efforts or to weaken your influence.” There is, far deeper than any intellectual divergence of opinion, a spiritual convergence of all truly religious natures. As the great philosopher said—*Not knowledge but action. Conduct* is the prime requisite. Let us join our work with yours—for it is the same work in the end, even if our means do differ. Try to think of us as we will try to think of you—as allies in one spiritual Communion. There is more of common between us, than either of us are wont to see.

But to those to whom this orthodox belief has become a hollow thing, held from habit, indolence, self-interest, we would say this:—“Do you ever ask yourselves, in the spirit of the religion you profess in name, if a religion that is not really believed in can do good to any man, can strengthen any society, if it can add spiritual life and truthfulness to a generation which keeps up the appearance of a faith without the reality, if a religion can work to any social and moral result,

if its whole intellectual doctrine is in a fluid and crumbling state?"

We would say this to earnest men yearning to see some good of a visible and fruitful kind accomplished in their time,—“What can be the practical good of a religion which, as the problems of life and complex societies grow wider, more and more resolutely declines to admit them into its sphere, and more and more yields the field of practical human improvement to science, experience, and worldly wisdom?” When the people are to be taught, a secular Board takes the place of the parson; when a pestilence arrives, we look to no ecclesiastical exorcism, but to biological research, in grave social struggles of class against class, we do not ask Churchmen to interpose, but appeal to the voice of social economics and practical politics. Daily, the gospel as delivered to the Apostles retreats further and further into some remote corner of the world’s work and thought, less and less pretending to direct industry, or politics, or art, or science, or even education. What is the practical good of maintaining a sort of Sunday God, a Heaven for the rare hours of solitary meditation, a Church which has nothing to say about the daily problems of life, nothing special to teach about social duty, no pretension to offer an opinion about the progress of thought—in fact no function at all, but to urge men to get quickly forth from this vale of tears, and to be deaf and blind to all its concerns, so long as they are doomed to linger in it?

Why do we make efforts so desperate to maintain creeds which define in philosophic abstractions mystic ideas about the Universe and its Triune Creator, why need we struggle for Churches, liturgies, and ceremonials, if the progress of science has so altered the canons of intellectual assent, and the course of civilisation has so transformed the wants and conditions of practical existence, that there is almost no point of contact between the daily life of modern man and these superhuman sublimities? Man sorely needs a religion to make life more spiritual in this world. And the priests only offer him gratuitous guessing about another world.

See what realities men neglect for the sake of these imaginations! The vast edifice of science is steadily covering the whole field of knowledge, the moral and social life of man, as well as his dwelling place and the world around him. And out of his new consensus of all human ideas, on a common plane of law, there has risen up the revelation of the life of all races of mankind knit up into one story through countless ages—so that we grasp the sense of a Humanity as a guiding and protecting power over our lives, real, and unmistakable in its nature, relatively to each of us feeble ones a vast, beneficent, and abiding Providence; so that the intelligent service of this mighty organism has become plain to us as a creed of human duty.

Behold then, whilst men's eyes were vaguely wandering round the skies in search of a vanished light that grows ever fainter and more dim, there has grown up



in the meantime a visible Power on earth, less dazzling in its brightness than the light in Heaven of old, but far more clear and solid, and amply able to inspire a noble life of work. Thus common sense and religion at last teach the same lesson, and the saving our own souls turns out to be the good old rule of doing our duty in this world in the way that Humanity both shows and enables us now to do it.

Common sense, science, religion, have at last found one creed and teach the same lesson. There is no longer any conflict with religion. Far more than this: there must be a great revival of religion, and the old spirit of orthodoxy has much to teach us still. To those who have parted for ever with the ancient Churches, to those who have come over definitely to us, or are in sympathy with positive ideas and not with theological, we would say this:—"Remember how much each of us owes to orthodox Christianity, how strong are the ties that bind us to what remains of life within it, to a large part of its history and many of its leading institutions!"

Our antagonism is one mainly of thought, of science; it is intellectual, but not practical. We do not repudiate the inner spirit that called them into being, nor discard their institutions with scorn. We abandon them simply because we find them obsolete; obsolete from the course of modern science, modern history, obsolete from the inevitable growth of civilisation.

We cannot forget this:—that these Orthodox communions (I include them all, Catholic, Protestant, es-

tablished, non-conforming, old and new, great and small) have, each in their degree, some noble remnants of their old spiritual force, a history that enshrines some of the most memorable records of human nature in its purest form, immortal works of human genius—that they still nourish within them exquisite sources of pathos, of heart-history, love and wisdom, which those whose lives are absorbed in the practical whirl of life and the doctrines and associations of physical science have more or less lost touch with—that these ancient communions retain institutions, traditions, instincts as to the beauty of holiness which are necessarily beyond the dream of any non-orthodox movement, and will continue to be beyond its dream for generations and generations to come.

These orthodox communions, are still most obviously in command of the field; they dominate great sections of society and control familiar institutions. They have their schools, congregational organisation, their charities, their good works on a thousand sides, their good lives and spiritual examples that none can deny, and no honest man would underrate. Theirs is a zeal for what is commonly understood by spiritual life. And all this we most unfeignedly acknowledge to be wholly beyond the reach of a handful of seekers after truth (and we cannot presume to count ourselves as more)—but rather we should be false to our principles if we failed to support it and to imitate it in the spirit of humbleness and generous recognition.

## CHAPTER III

### DEISTICAL CRITICISM

I TURN to consider those schools of thought which hold by the idea of God, as the Absolute Creator of the Universe, but have abandoned any scheme of Revelation, of inspired creeds or Churches, the scheme of Redemption and personal salvation through Christ, the Incarnate Deity. And, with all this, they have naturally abandoned all ecclesiastical organisation and institutions, except those of a most simple and also most elastic sort.

Many of these schools give up almost everything that the Orthodox Churches regard as vital in Christianity. They hold neither by any divine institution of the Church, nor by the divine inspiration of the Scripture, nor by the efficacy of any ceremonial institution; they believe not in Trinity, nor Atonement, nor in any mediation between Creature and Creator; they turn aside from all the forms of the Creed and they make no attempt to formulate a creed of their own. It might be supposed by some who know little of our views, that since these Deists have abandoned so much which Positive thought cannot accept, the bond between Positivism and Deists, Theists, or Unitarians, was closer than the bond between Positivism and the Orthodox Churches.

This is not quite so! Strange as it may sound to

some who know little of us, both within and without the Churches, it is clear that the religion of Humanity has in general scheme and in ideal more kinship with historic and orthodox Christianity than it has with any bare Theism whatever.

It is no doubt true that Positivists could give no assent to any one of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, even if they could give them any meaning; nor could they subscribe to any clause in the last Pope's Syllabus; nor accept any proposition because it is found in the Bible; nor could they take any single sentence of the Prayer-book in its literal sense as understood by a devout Churchman.

Notwithstanding this, the Positive scheme looks on Religion, its influence on life, the things to be done by Religion, the means whereby Religion may do it, much as Orthodox Christianity does—and not as Deism does. The Positive scheme contemplates a systematic body of logical doctrines, not of course either rigid or final, but as recognised truths of philosophy. It looks for the rise of a regular body of institutions and an organisation to discipline and teach. In its own way, it admits the idea of Providence and a moral government of the world by a benevolent power. It has its own analogue of a scheme of salvation, its own form of inspiration and revelation, both understood as natural, not as supernatural forces; it has its own mode of a future life beyond the grave—that which can properly be called a Church and that which may fairly be called personal devotion.

All these, it is true, are understood by the Positivist in a way entirely *human* and *scientific*, and have nothing of the superhuman and transcendental about them. But those who are willing to reduce religion altogether to an Absolute and Incomprehensible Almighty, dominant in the Universe, but not specially or expressly in any relation to man, are no nearer to the Positive philosophy than any Catholic mystic, whilst they have abandoned as idle or absurd those religious institutions, scheme of doctrines, discipline and sacraments, those spiritual traditions and habits, which Positivism recognises as of indestructible moral and social use. Their solitary dogma is the assertion of Theology. whilst they have stript Theology of all that superstructure with which Positivism has undoubted affinity, and wherein it finds the real social power of the Christian Churches.

The general term, Deism, or Theism, will cover a very wide range of belief, from the modern development of Unitarianism, which has no definite gospel at all, to the philosophical and purely intellectual Theism of Mill or even of Voltaire.

The typical Theism with which we are most familiar is the belief in an Almighty, All-wise, All-good Person, who rules this world as a Providence, who has not vouchsafed to man any distinct revelation either in Book or in Church, whose nature and attributes can be felt and known by the human soul for all practical purposes, with whose spirit and purpose we can hold spiritual communion, the following of whose will is the essence of

a good life, and the ultimate entering into whose presence is the crown of a right life. This seems a fair summing up of the views about religion firmly held by a great many good and wise men, both within and outside of the official pale of several orthodox communions. It seems to be considered that to believe as much as this justifies a man in holding himself out as a Christian, and in practically acting as an active member of an orthodox Church. Not a few have put this position to themselves in logical form and consciously maintain it. With a very large number of persons bred up in orthodox communions, it is not so much a conscious philosophical doctrine as a habit of mind or a practical survival of faith.

It is no business of ours to seek to extirpate this belief where it practically conduces to a higher life; and we shall certainly not presume to offer it any kind of refutation. Positivism is emphatically not Atheism; and the last thing it would countenance is the barren task of attempting a logical disproof of Theism. Nor can we fail to recognise the moral and social services of a view of Theism which consigns to a lower stage of civilisation the primitive and half-barbarous type of an Almighty who was not All-good, nor All-wise, as men now conceive goodness and wisdom. The old Hebrew God of Battles, the God of Wrath, the terrible Judge of the Apocalypse, of Calvin, of Puritanism in all its forms, has been practically superseded by a serene and beneficent, though somewhat transcendental and mysti-

cal Ideal. The beautiful Theism of Francis Newman, of Theodore Parker, of Dr. Martineau, is a great advance upon the God of Wrath of Bunyan and of Fox, of Loyola and Simon de Montfort; and it is a return to a healthy moral currency to have got rid of the vindictive and despotic conception of the Divine Government.

But this process of refining away the ancient and scriptural conception of Godhead has its own counterbalancing evils. It undermines dogmatic Theology, for the entire scheme of Salvation rests upon the idea of an offended Deity not to be appeased without blood. And when dogmatic theology is discredited, faith becomes a matter of personal opinion, in the absence of any organised Church and body of doctrine. For, with the discarding of the Christian scheme on moral grounds the Church and its institutions are left without basis. And with these disappears also all regular method of discipline. Now, from the historical point of view, the social influences of Christianity have depended not on its creed in their bare propositions, but on its social organisation and its various practical resources. Abelard might make easy work of Saint Bernard's creed; but the social victory remained with the saint, not with the logician.

Consider the Catholic Church from the historic and social point of view, with its vast machinery of order and discipline, with all its memorable traditions and secular experience, with its multifarious ways of appealing to

the human mind, with its imposing body of institutions adapted to all races, types, ages, and diversities of man. Viewed as a machine, even the sceptic, with an eye for historic interest and social organisation, cannot deny it success. The sceptic smiles, the Protestant scowls, as they read round the mighty dome of Michael Angelo at St. Peter's the magniloquent inscription—*super hanc petram œdificabo*—but they can find no human organisation recorded which can vie with that rock, unless it be the Roman Empire to which Peter's in some sense was the heir.

Consider again orthodox Protestantism with its Bible, and the immense body of religious ideas, precepts, and habits, which has grown up round the Bible, its history of preachers, martyrs and heroes, all the great characters it has formed, the nations which it has infused with energy and passion, its poetry, if not its art, its stern morality, if not its spiritual grace. This fierce, hard, self-sufficient dogmatism, ranging from that of Cromwell to that of Bunley of Balfour or Mause Headrigg, has deeply affected modern civilisation. Evangelical Puritanism, like ecclesiastical organisation, have both proved able to mould minds and conduct, men and societies, in definite and permanent modes.

But Deism, Theism, Natural Theology, and all mere theistic schemes of religion fling aside all this—Creeds, Church, Bible, institutions, sacraments, and the whole mass of Christian traditions:—in fact, all that gave Catholicism or Protestantism their social power; and



they reduce the religious influence to one principle. Creation by an Absolute and Incomprehensible Being, whose nature and will every one is left to explain, interpret, and follow as he best can, in the absence of any divinely inspired Church, and of any revealed word of God.

What can be the result; what do we see to be the result? What, but vagueness, laxness of mind, fluid ideas instead of a systematic creed, in the intellectual field. In the moral field, a religious attitude, necessarily personal, individualist, and self-contained, a source of separation rather than of combination. All the social forces of Christianity they discard without attempting to substitute any other. The fusion of society with religion is not open to them, inasmuch as they take from religion its social organisation. The fusion of science with religion is not open to them, inasmuch as they restrict religion to a sole transcendental idea about which Science has not a word to say.

The inevitable result of any dogmatic Deism, as the sole foundation of religious life is this, that it has almost any influence, good or bad, to which the nature of the individual believer may chance to incline. It breaks men up into small groups, in its more violent forms into separate units, for the fluidity of all *a priori* conceptions about the Absolute makes a common creed impossible for any large number. Where there are no collective religious habits, no institutions, no organic discipline, there can be no real spiritual society. The institutions,

discipline, and organisation of the Catholic Church followed by a long chain of deduction from the elaborate creed of Trinitarian orthodoxy; those of Protestantism were deduced by a vast accumulated mass of commentary on the Scriptures. But where there is a profound and dominant religious idea, but no spiritual society, the result will usually be some form of egoism:—self-engrossment, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness: it may be in a form highly refined, broadly intellectual, possibly sentimental—but still essentially absorbed in self.

The reason of this is, that each believer, in the absence of church or revelation, has to imagine his God and God's will out of his own mind, or the views current in the small group to which he happens to be attached. And in either case, it ends in his deifying the character and the qualities which the believer himself most values. The Deist's God thus tends to become a glorified image of the believer's own mind and nature. It is a different image for each believer, and it is an image which cannot be corrected or improved by the test of history, or of evidence, or even of the teaching of literature, for it remains a sublime and paramount ideal of power and glory in the mind of each individual, which he thinks nothing else on earth can be worthy to expound. This was seen in a very marked way in those extreme forms of Puritanism which discarded even the simplest form of Church association and government, and reduced even Biblical religion to the strict elements

of creature and Creator, all intermediate agency between thrown off. The result was seen in portentous examples of the exaltation of self-will, both for good and for evil, as the nature of the man was grand or mean.

It must be remembered that this is a *tendency*, not a certain consequence. All forms of religion work out in result really better than could be expected from their dogmatic side, for in stimulating the pure instinct of reverence and of devotion they indirectly strengthen the moral sense, so that it corrects the intellectual crudities of the creed. But just as the Romans deified Rome, Victory, Prudence, Wealth, Courage, and Beauty and Love of Beauty—nay even Commerce and Gain, and on the whole with valuable, though variable effects—so, to the mere Deist, God's law too often becomes in practice the law which he as a man would like to see prevailing in the world. To the noble spirit, to the large heart and brain, to the statesman, the poet, the social reformer, Deism takes the form of a high, but somewhat characteristic ideal, intensifying his noble dreams and ambition, and also intensifying his personal hates, loves, and sympathies. His God is a majestic reflexion of himself, thrown upon a mirror which magnifies and glorifies each trait.

To the harder and ruder natures this Deism takes the form of a harsh, arbitrary, and cruel Tyrant:—commanding each man to do or to suffer, to cause others to do or to suffer things which seem in accordance with his own propensities, and prejudices. It may be the nurse

of mere Pharisaism, of cynicism, of ambition, the mask of his personal wilfulness, of his passion, his thirst for power. But its tendency is always towards a personal type, exalting the individual, dividing man from man, founding nothing, combining none, but breaking up society into, it may be powerful, it may be noble, but not seldom into self-seeking souls. Of such are the typical Manfreds, the Wordsworthian Recluses, the Hegelian dreamers, social censors such as Carlyle, or Ruskin, whose religion is, in its vagueness and self-assertion, truly personal, in spite of their genius and their fine sympathies.

We may take as a type of this latter-day Deism, the most creative and effective English genius of our time—Thomas Carlyle, in whom some of its highest features will be found. When we recall the wide influence which that great writer has exerted: colouring more or less the poetry of Tennyson, the artistic reform of Ruskin, the historical schools of Froude and Lecky, the theological schools of Maurice and Kingsley, the theistic schools of Francis Newman, W. R. Greg, Fitzjames Stephen, C. Voysey, we may see how typical a force is that of the famous "Sartor."

In speaking of Carlyle we are not about to deal with him as a historian, or as a political or social reformer, much less as critic, poet, and master of the literary art. We may take his religious attitude apart, and contrast it with the religious attitude of Positivism, treating him with far more respect than he was wont to express to-

wards any non-theological philosophy or any philosophy whatever. From this contrast much may be made more clear. We will take him as the finest modern expression of the Deistical spirit as that which refers the life of man and of society to a Divine spirit manifesting itself in ways inscutable, but unmistakable by the wise man, through all human things as throughout the Universe—a spirit, not expressed in articulate form, or capable of clear expression in human language, not revealed in any book, not confided to any Church, nor written on any Table of the Law, but spiritually graven on the heart of the true man, and to be recognised and obeyed when the true man speaks. It is a sublime but intangible doctrine, abhorrent of dogma and of creed, with no rites, institutions, revelation, or government—a faith having neither prophet, priest, nor king, save such as spontaneously arise and are no less instinctively obeyed.

We have a truly deep sympathy with very much that Carlyle has done. Of all men in our age Auguste Comte and Thomas Carlyle have shown the most profound sense of the inner meaning of history, and have most closely coincided in their chief historical judgments. Carlyle has but somewhat coloured and sometimes distorted what Comte has said of Cromwell, Frederick, Mahomet, Charlemagne, the Mediæval Chiefs and monks, the English and the French Revolutions, the evils of debased Parliamentarism and Plutonomy. A second point of sympathy is in his unfail-

ing hold on the moral forces of society, the supremacy of character, his keen eye for a great man, his sincerity, purity, courage.

But we are now speaking of Carlyle as a religious reformer, and contrasting his individual and intuitive Theism with scientific and systematic Positivism. The meaning and essence of Positivism is its base of scientific and systematic philosophy. To Carlyle science was a dry and barren guide to anything but material life; philosophy was more or less of a wind-bag; and "system" of any kind was a dry rot. A system of science could only be described in his vigorous language as "Meie dead dog." To the religion of Humanity, individual men and women, however great and good, are those who serve, whom Humanity has formed, and whom it enables to do great or good work. To Carlyle, Humanity is but the obscure host whom favoured individuals deign to govern and to instruct. Our faith is in progress, gradual and normal development through the entire social organism. To Carlyle, the ignoble vulgar wander to and fro in the wilderness, till the destined Hero appears to drive or to rebuke them into some temporary oasis. For the religion of Humanity, the kingdom of this earth is given to those who are rich in heart. Christ reserves Heaven for those who are poor in spirit. Carlyle adjudges the thrones of earth as well as of Heaven to those of big brain and iron will. Carlyle's religious basis is the subjective ideal of an Almighty Ruler: Auguste Comte's religious basis

is demonstrable knowledge of a progressive Humanity, and the practical service of Humanity, in ways expounded by a trained body of teachers.

The prophet of Hero-Worship speaks lightly in all things of science and philosophy, but he is peculiarly scornful of the intrusion of such things into the social world or the domain of history. He is never weary of displaying his contempt for men of science or of speculative thought, if they chance to pass across the stage of politics and war, or to fall beneath the notice of a born King of men. A curious example of this is the strident mockery with which he speaks of Maupertuis, an astronomer whose brilliant demonstration that our earth is a spheroid oblate at the poles was one of the triumphs of positive physics, but which has earned for its acute discoverer the Carlylese nickname of the "flattener of the poles." It is in the same way that potent philosophers like Diderot, Adam Smith, Hobbes, Hume, and we may add as social reformer the name of Bentham, stir Carlyle to inextinguishable laughter or to apocalyptic anathemas.

The *Hero-worship*, the *Cromwell*, the *French Revolution*, *Sartor Resartus*, *Past and Present* and many an early essay, were full of fine thoughts and of prolific truths—but there is a melancholy decadence in the long and splendid career of Thomas Carlyle, which his truest admirers must trace to a deep error at the very back of his grand brain. He ended in an almost cynical glorification of the strong man as such; almost in exul-

tation over cruelty, arrogance, and ambition, provided only it was strong; in utter contempt for patient industry and human suffering as such. And at last he seems willing to justify whatever is done by such men as Frederick and Napoleon, even by Bismarck and Governor Eyre, who enters into the Walhalla of the Great by virtue of his summary execution of some negro agitators in Jamaica.

The same disdain of any but the successful heroes and masterful rulers of mankind distorts his understanding of the French Revolution and of the chequered and far from heroic story of modern social reform. We need not now nicely weigh in the balance all the strange genius of the great historian, but we note how strongly his posthumous Memoirs illustrate the morbid side of his unlovely creed. Those who love him will turn aside from his imprecations on modern life and contemporary men, his truly grotesque use of the names of God, Hell, Devil, his concentration on the imaginary world he fancied, and even on his own petty cares and aches. There are hours of despair or ill-humour, as we read his secret outpourings of heart, when he almost seems to have persuaded himself that his Good Principle had withdrawn from his creation in disgust, or that some Evil Principle had after all won the victory. Strange, but not unexpected result of ungovernable Theism in a powerful nature!

At the centre of the man was his strong, burning, almost fierce sense of a presiding Deity: always vague,



and approachable by the will rather than the intellect, and at last little more than the expression of Teufelsdröckian indignation and scorn. What sort of an Almighty did this become, where creation had taken a turn so universally wrong; or how could moral government be predicated at all of a generation, where almost all is vile, and, if words be taken in their literal sense, only awaiting Hell-Fire to be consumed? The philosophic and religious explanation of all this in a man of great genius and noble nature, is obvious enough. It was the survival of Calvinistic pessimism when the God of Wrath and God of Battles of the Covenanters had been stripped of all that made the Gospel tender, beautiful, and loving; when the Sermon on the Mount, Parables, Miracles, Passion, and Epistles, had ceased to have any Divine origin; when the entire scheme of salvation through Christ's blood and the revelation of God's will in Scripture, had been swept away to give place to direct visions of the Almighty Will in the manner of a Hebrew prophet.

The dangers of assuming the part of Jeremiah in a world full of science, of industry, of knowledge, and of good intentions are very real. The Lord no longer speaks to a rebellious people through the mouth of a chosen messenger; and he who believes that he has such commission from the Judge of all men is apt to mislead. So the view of society, of life, history, duty, and human nature which Carlyle poured forth with such zeal and power, was a splendid lyrical medley of per-

sonal feeling, of individual enthusiasm, passion, and prejudice—full also of insight and of nobleness, with no little of misconception and even ill-nature. Never have historic judgments and social doctrines been put forward with less of scientific method and systematic philosophy. Never has the regeneration of society been preached with a creed so entirely anti-social and personal.

It will be instructive to contrast the Hero-Worship of Thomas Carlyle with the reverence for the great ones of the Past as systematised by Auguste Comte. Both seem to aim at the same thing—but in very different modes. Hero-worship, as expounded by Carlyle, is constantly tending to the individual glorification of a few—for the sake of the few, to the material profit perhaps of the many, but to their moral degradation, it may be, unless in so far as they humbly accept and honour their Saviour. Nay, at last the latter-day preacher seems to regard men almost as Napoleon regarded them, as the food of his cannon, as the pedestal whereon the royal one could be set up to eternal glory. *Paucis nascitur humanum genus*—seems to be the motto of such hero-worship and the justification of their careers.

There is no saying of antiquity for which Comte has expressed a greater loathing. It sums up the worst form of slavery, oligarchy, and despotism, political and social. To Comte, Humanity means the great mass of men. The greater men are but servants of their fellow-

men, organs of Humanity, morally and intellectually its creatures, organically and historically, its teachers and guides. The Mediæval Pope was fond of naming himself *servus servorum Domini Dei*. Carlyle's hero might call himself *dominus servorum Domini Dei*. Comte's worthy may hope to be styled, after a life of service, as *servus servorum Humani Generis*. In his Calendar of worthies Comte has placed 558 names of all kind of eminence, simply as types of innumerable similar, if less famous, workers. And to these 558 names he adds days to commemorate Humanity in the mass, another for all the Dead unnamed, a third for all good women.

Throughout his entire works, there is no glorification of power, none of force, of success, of superiority to common men, simply as such. The honour is given to services conferred on fellow-men, not to genius however transcendent, or exploits however marvellous. All human worth has its just due, nor is honour reserved to conquerors, statesmen, kings, prophets, and heroes. The patient men of exact science, the inventors, the toilers at the lowest stages of the human work-shop, are all duly recognised. To have made Humanity the richer, the better, the wiser, the happier—is the one title to honour, above victories, conquests, genius, or glory.

Our business in this essay is not by any means to attempt a general estimate of the work of Carlyle, but simply to trace the practical effect of pure Deism in a powerful intellect and a fine nature. The God of the

Hebrews, purged of all that Gospel and Church have built up round that memorable creation of Syrian poetry, ends, as we see in one signal instance, in a kind of saturnine mysticism and an ungovernable license of personal judgment, the science, the philosophy, the institutions of former ages, being all regarded as more or less exploded failures. There are, however, many other forms of theistic belief where religion is based upon the conception of a moral Ruler of the Universe, with a complete rejection of orthodox dogmas of the creeds, and of the divine authority of the Scriptures. Most of these, though deeply at the outset influenced by Carlyle and by German Theosophism, retained by an elaborate system of adaptation, much of what was profound and spiritual, both in the Old Testament and the New, especially in the Epistles of St. Paul. And they so far retained the institutions and social spirit of the Church that many of these reformers claimed to remain priests within the undefined and undefinable pale of the Establishment—and, in the absence of any real spiritual authority, within that Erastian State department they asserted their claim with success.

The remarkable Oxford movement of forty years ago, which was exactly described by the term *Neo-Christianity*, the "Broad-Churchism" of many others, the very interesting movement led by Mr. Stopford Brooke, who preferred the plainer course of passing outside the legal pale of the Establishment—all differ more or less amongst themselves, but they all have these features in

common. They aim at a complete revision of Christianity as a religion, on strict historical and scientific lines; they do not attribute Godhead to Jesus of Nazareth, but substitute a moral for a literal Redemption of Mankind by the blood of Christ, the scheme of salvation with them is a metaphorical regeneration of the moral nature; the Scriptures are valuable writings of antiquity but not the peculiar Word of God.

With much of all this Positivists can very heartily concur. Positivism, on the religious side, is itself an effort to revive the moral and social efficacy of Christian ages on a true scientific and historical basis—placing what is permanent in these institutions on the firm ground of Sociology instead of Revelation. And Positivists also find inexhaustible meaning in the scriptural books, when stripped of their supernatural pretensions, and read in the same way as we read the poets and the moralists of other ancient and modern literatures. So far the work of the Neo-Christians is our work. But this excellent purpose seems to us hampered at every step and constantly neutralised by retaining as the centre of the entire religious scheme the non-historical and non-scientific hypothesis of Absolute Creation, together with an undefined supernatural element in the story of Jesus, and in the composition of the Sacred books. If the moral and social forces of Christendom are to be saved by science and history (as Positivists insist), Jesus must not be put before St. Paul, or even before Socrates, Boudha, and St. Bernard, we must treat the Gos-

pels as we treat the *Acta Sanctorum*; and since religion can tell us nothing certain about creation, it is in vain to make religion occupy itself exclusively with hypothetical expositions of the will of the Creator. It has indeed been expressly stated on behalf of one of these movements that the personality and idealisation of Christ amount to much the same as the organic life and idealisation of Humanity. But we may well ask why the historic and complex ideal of Humanity should be cut down to the mythical and limited type of Christ; and what is gained for truth and morality by continuing to attribute a quasi-revelation to the Gospel, after frank rejection of the legends of the Divine Birth, Miracles, Resurrection, and Ascension of the young Galilean reformer.

It belongs, however, more to our present purpose to deal with those types of Theism which are not so much Neo-Christian as anti-Christian and neo-theist. These were represented in a former generation by the writers in the *Westminster Review*, by such men as Francis Newman, W. R. Greg, and more recently by the founders of the Theistic Church and by Ernest Renan, more or less by such men as Theodore Parker, Matthew Arnold, Mark Pattison, Sir J. Fitzjames Stephen and more or less by the learned and ingenious author of "Philosophic Doubt." Both inside and outside the Church of England we have had theories of religion, full of very beautiful ideas and of spiritual insight, with an unmistakable moral and social zeal, built up on a basis of

transcendental Theism, as itself sufficient for all religious uses, and on that ground practically discarding anything like Christian creed, or church, or scriptures, or institutions. Some of these wage vigorous war on the whole fabric of orthodox doctrine and attack the holy books of the pious Christian with almost Voltairean acrimony and scorn. Some of them, as was done by Renan and Matthew Arnold, use the language of theology and indeed of the pulpit, whilst making it abundantly plain to the enlightened reader that to them neither Creed nor Scripture has any divine origin or authority, and if they use the style of Bossuet, it is as it might be used by Voltaire himself.

These various forms of Theistic belief, often, as our argument implies, producing fine spiritual thoughts and breathing an elevated morality, seem to agree in this—that the doctrine they teach is eminently variable and a reflexion of the personal bias of the believer himself. The pure Theist fashions his own religion, his religion does not fashion him. And, what is no less characteristic and no less questionable, his fashion is not that of his brother Theist. Where the great centre and sole ideal of any religion is not amenable to evidence, logic, revelation, tradition, or Church—but rests entirely on what is called “the higher consciousness” of the individual mind, the results will differ according to personal idiosyncrasy; and religion will in practice take as many forms as there are types of character and of mental constitution.

The Theism of Dr. Martineau presents us with an Absolute Almighty Being of infinite energy, for he sees *will* in all things human and physical. To those theists who, like J Stuart Mill, are deeply impressed with the reign of universal law, and with the idea of evolution, the Deity presents itself as a residuum, or impersonation of the realm of the unexplained and inexplicable, a philosophical postulate, or first Cause To Francis Newman, with his intense sympathy with suffering and loathing of arbitrary force, the Ruler of the Universe seems more reverently to be imagined as very wise, very powerful, and absolutely good—but not omniscient or omnipotent in the strict sense. Some would thus heighten the moral glory of creation by limiting the wisdom and power of its Author. Some seem, with Carlyle and Bunyan, disposed to illustrate the moral purpose of creation, by robing his majesty with all that is awful and his mercy with unflinching justice. Others again, with Ernest Renan, seem inclined to reduce their Theism to an iridescent philosophical arc, faintly over-arching the Heaven of meditation with a beautiful but occasional light, and serving as a possible evasion of an otherwise insoluble dilemma. The more recent *Foundations of Belief* seek to prove that, as the ultimate axioms of Physical Science are *assumptions*, not demonstrations, Theology may equally rest on hypothetical assumptions. In the end, there are as many types of the Deity as there are types of human nature. \*

All of these theistic schools of thought, however much



they may differ amongst themselves, are ready to make it a charge against Positivism that its scheme of human history ignores the idea of a Personal Providence, and to them the existence of personal providence is the sum and substance of religion. But the foundation of the Positivist synthesis is the impossibility of making any truly scientific and historical conception of men and of nature square with a moral idea of Absolute Creation. The Positivist philosophy of history amply allows for the practical but imperfect providence of Humanity itself, and is not embarrassed with all the difficulties which beset the hopeless task of adjusting a Perfect Artificer with a lame, imperfect, and impotent product.

With many cultivated minds a vague Theism serves as a protest against anything systematic in religion, we may almost say anything intelligible or capable of being reduced to propositions. There is an intellectual democracy often found in the most conservative spirits, which revolts against any logical form of belief and rises in instinctive rebellion against anything in the shape of a religious institution or organisation. This quietism and mysticism is a not uncommon product of literary fastidiousness. And the quietist, the mystic, the poetic temperament can all find shelter under a Theism which never seeks to be expressed in terms, and can seldom be treated as pointing to any practical issue.

With some again an amorphous Theism is the expression of a silent, and often unconscious antipathy to science, or at least to scientific methods. There are still

many cultivated minds, and our literary type of education much increases their number, to which strict scientific methods seem wholly inapplicable to the higher ideas. Desultory education, and an exaggerated attention to language dispose many to shrink from anything that pretends to a definite organisation of life or a systematic organisation of knowledge, to any comprehensive *synthesis* whatever; and these "Independents" and "Cameronians" of culture take this to be due to a free spirit and a clear brain. With some, this feeling is little more than a kind of literary vagabondage. But with all the superior minds, it is no doubt a genuine and honourable dread of anything which may crush out the sorrows, aspirations and powers of the individual soul, a not unreasonable fear of a possible progression towards a dead level of mediocrity, the loss of poetry and spontaneity in the free human spirit. We can all sympathise with such fears. But the alarm may be excessive, and the remedy sought in a veiled religious Nihilism may be too dearly bought.

Positivists are content to trust to the steady and unbroken advance of science, surely and triumphantly extending its domain over moral and social as much as physical phenomena. The normal evolution of society as a branch of science is a recognised postulate of healthy philosophy, and the reduction of history to law is but a matter of time, learning, and insight. Who can doubt that the future is on this side? Who will believe that the theory of *inscrutable will* is destined to triumph over

the theory of *intelligible law*? With us, in our trust in synthesis, stands the history of all the great systems of faith that have ever triumphed, all of them with creeds, institutions, discipline, education. The history of the Past has been with the organisation of society. Why is the history of the Future to be with the unlimited play of the individual fancy? It cannot be.

If Renan and Jowett, and the historical school of modern theologians both here and abroad, insist on the gradual development of man's spiritual life, if they regard the Bible as one of many keys to unlock the secrets of its ancient story, Positivism teaches us to do the same. We have a far wider, clearer, more consistent view of history open to us, inasmuch as we are free from the inevitable distortion that arises out of the attempt to read universal history (as Bossuet did) by the light of a divine purpose and with the eyes of theological interpretation. Where the genius of the "eagle of Meaux" so signally failed, the modern theologian who essays the same task is not likely to succeed. Yet, if Theism is to abandon all hope of pointing to the will of God in the story of man, what is the use of Theism at all? To rational science all phases of civilisation stand on a common ground. We can do full justice to Polytheism as well as Monotheism, to Fetichism as well as Catholicism; nor have we any need to exalt the apostles and the fathers above Zoroaster, Confucius or Bouddha. We have no need to study the ancient creeds through Biblical or Theistic spectacles. We have not to force the facts

of the past in order to show the divine in the human. It is enough for us to make manifest the humanity in man and the growth of humanity on the earth.

If pure and spiritual theists such as Dr. Martineau and Francis Newman insist on the supreme force of Will or of Conscience and of the moral energies, precisely the same field is open to the Positivist in his view of the gradual progress of Humanity. Its unwearied efforts to shape its destinies to good, in spite of failures and external difficulties, opens to us a picture of limitless force of will triumphing over obstacles. Our will is a human, intelligible, natural will: a will that is great and glorious because it is the human triumph over obstacles. It is a will strictly consistent with *law*, that can be made compatible with the material forces of the world around us. It is not a superhuman, absolute, transcendental will, which seems to exclude the element of nobility, in a human sense, which approaches a contradiction in terms, when we attribute volition (i.e., a desire to obtain some end not yet achieved) to an Omnipotent Absolute Being, the sole Creator and Disposer of all things in the universe.

How do we conceive, in any intelligible sense, the *will* of an Absolute Being, whose every volition must necessarily realise itself in the act of forming; who, being above any point of time or increase of force, cannot have at one moment any object that he had not already, or attain to anything in which he was wanting before? In what way does volition in the Absolute give us any

sense of power? He who is Absolute is already perfect and unchangeable; and as such the Absolute can desire no better, fear no worse, gain nothing which he has not got, and become nothing that he is not already. Of him neither progress, nor improvement, nor development can be said, for the Absolute cannot vary, nor can the Perfect improve. For absolute being, it is inconceivable that a wish can be satisfied; for the satisfaction of a wish implies previous want; he can have no obstacles, for an obstacle would be a limitation; he can know no failure, no delay, no hope, and no wish; for effort, struggle, opposition are a contradiction in terms. Absolute Omnipotence can only be described in the language of the Bible as I AM. In what intelligible sense can we predicate will of the I AM?

Whilst Dr. Martineau, whom we recognise as the most venerable and accomplished apostle of Theism, thus insists on the necessity for an Absolute, Perfect, Omnipotent Personal Will working in all things, human and cosmical, material and moral, in the Thunderstorm of the Tropics and in the whirlwinds of the Sun, but more audibly in the still small voice within man's heart, another acute and accomplished mind, a nature as pure and spiritual as that of Dr. Martineau, Mr. Francis Newman, who comes out of the same school and touches him so closely, repudiates the idea of an Omnipotent God, to whom the universe presents no resistance. In that case, he says, the wisdom of God would be an idle term, if he could meet no difficulty; and the goodness

of God would be more than questionable, if he be absolutely free to make a good and happy world, and yet has chosen to create sin and suffering. Hence, whilst Dr. Martineau is lost in raptures over Absolute Omnipotence, and sees the manifestation of the Supreme Will in the thunderbolt, the pestilence, the earthquake and every extremity of moral evil, another leader of the same school would sacrifice the power of the Creator in order to save his benevolence, and drops the Absolute in his idea of Godhead in order that he may make Godhead intelligible and consistent.

Such are the divisions on first principles amongst those who come forward to found religion and to organise society on a basis of pure Theism, who throw away the revelation of the Scripture, the authority of Churches, sacraments, rites, doctrines and articles of belief; who make Christianity a series of dissolving views, and treat the orthodox scheme of salvation as an obsolete myth telling us that the one sure hope in the future is a simple and rational Theism, though the attributes, elements, and purposes of God are even amongst themselves the subject of incessant dispute.

## CHAPTER IV

### NATURE WORSHIP

I NOW turn to consider the *moral* and *social* effects of various Systems of Religion. By that I mean the way in which they form the *personal* character of believers and colour the general tone of the *Society* which accepts these creeds.

Systems of Religion are too often regarded solely from the point of view of their truth or falsehood—or else of their power to stimulate certain emotions. I propose to test them by their action on character and life. If there is a thing on which Positivism specially insists it is this:—

1. To be constructive, not critical;
  2. To be synthetic, not specialist;
  3. To be comprehensive, not solvent and dispersive.
- Positivism is *encyclopædic*—in the sense of dealing with human nature in all its functions and attributes, and in that aim, assimilating the great ideas and legacies of the past.

It is the true *Eirenicon*—that which brings peace, the final harmony between the secular battle of religions—the conciliation of which all reformers have dreamed, and of which in the conception of Humanity we see the dawn. In the religion of Humanity the best spirit of

anterior systems is retained, amplified and explained. It justifies and fulfils the aspiration of the earlier systems of belief.

We repudiate the habit of all religious reformers who assailed and vilified their predecessors whilst often adopting some of their least valuable traditions. All new systems of faith did this more or less. Even Polytheism, elastic and tolerant as it was, swept away the Fetichist systems it found current amongst conquered peoples, such as in Egypt, India or Gaul. And we know how fiercely Monotheism, both in its Christian and its Mussulman form, swept away the forms of Polytheism amongst its subjects. Mussulmans denounced Christians, as "infidels"; as Christians called them miscreants. In Europe, the Eastern and the Western Churches assailed each other, as did, and as do, Protestants and Catholics. Christ's prophecy that he came to send a sword into the world, not peace, has been abundantly justified in the centuries. And to-day Agnostics, Freethinkers and Atheists retaliate with mockery on the Churches which so long defied them. Now, Humanity comes to bring peace—reconciliation—harmony. For Positivists are the only kind of religious reformers who do not despise their predecessors.

But we go much farther. Not only are Positivists free from all unjust depreciation of the religious conceptions of the past, but they accept, adopt and enlarge very much in earlier systems. Nearly all forms of religion retained much that they had received from their



predecessors, even from the systems they superseded. But, too often, in ignorance or unconsciously, they adopted some of the most worthless elements, and often quite misunderstood or misused them. The Polytheism of Egypt was a strange compound of the earlier worship of brutes. The idolatry of Polytheism, indeed, was usually a development of Fetichism. Rome adopted a mass of practices drawn from the old worship of material objects, such as the sacred fire of the Vestal Virgins, the Lares and Penates, the Sacred Festivals, and the Omens. Christianity in turn adopted the idea of the perpetual fire on the altar, the theory of vicarious sacrifice, the purification by water as in baptism, and the sacramental wafer and cup. Anglicans adopted so much of Catholicism that round some Protestant "altars" there may be seen an exact imitation of Catholic ritual.

Now the whole idea of *Atonement*, the pivot of the Christian faith, both in its Catholic or its Protestant form, even in its Unitarian shape, is nothing but a survival of the inhuman idea of human sacrifices as the propitiation of powers hostile to man. We are shocked by the African "customs" of averting the Spirit of Evil by slaughtering men and women. But this antique superstition survives in a new form. The priest celebrating the Mass and partaking of the Host (*i.e.*, Latin for *victim*), the Anglican priesthood or the Salvation Army preaching about the blood of Christ "cleansing from all sin"—the whole mountain of legend that Theo-

logy has constructed about the vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer—is a modern adaptation of the primitive superstition of Fetichism.

In their origin, most of these religious observances of savages had some sort of useful effect. And in a more refined form, when the evil is purged out, something of permanent value may often survive. The typical examples of this may be found in the worship of the Dead, in the adoration of the Sun or the Sky, and especially in a religious observance of one day in the week. The task of mature civilisation is to retain the valuable and discard the mischievous element in ancient superstitions. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to retain some of the external forms of antique worship, and to get rid of the moral and social reaction which first animated the spirit of the founders.

It is said that Positivism has borrowed much from Catholic ritual, especially its *sacraments* and the conception of a spiritual power. Certainly, this is true, and is no sort of reproach. Dr. Congreve answered Huxley with as much wit as conviction: Positivism is Catholicism *plus* Science—*i.e.*, its creed is the evidence of science in all its forms, but its purpose is a moral and social religion. It is the characteristic of Humanity, that this idea alone is perfectly and fully human, can harmonise other types of civilisation and incorporate the good, the true, and the humane.

The creed of Humanity stimulates a fair and sympathetic regard for all the great historic forms of re-

ligion; and hence its constant care for history, and especially the history of religion. Far from looking on any of the extant forms of religion, on modern morality, on social institutions, as final, satisfactory, and complete, it regards them as transitional, imperfect, and radically unsound. But, not agreeing with them in repudiating all their predecessors, Positivists hold that a good deal of what has gone before may be revived, and developed on a sounder basis of scientific reality.

The primitive forms of religion discoverable by history or observation of uncivilised races are all classed by Comte under the general name of *Fetichism*. The term was introduced into European philosophy by President de Brosse in 1760. Comte uses it to describe any kind of awe paid to material objects which primitive man invested with vitality and power to influence his life. This tendency Comte described as spontaneous, universal, and indelible. There is an underlying truth in Fetichism, which is the *activity* of material things. The error of the Fetichists was in confusing *activity* with *vitality*, and even with *feeling*. But there is both moral and social, and even scientific, value in the Fetichist assumption that external objects were not absolutely inert, but had some of the characters of man. Fetichism stimulated the sense of the connection between Man and Nature in all its forms, animal, vegetable, terrestrial, or celestial. It aided to develop the sense of local Home—the Lares and Penates are survivals of the

idea—and thus it created the institution of the Family.

Along with this local sense of Home for the Family, it founded the vast step in civilisation produced by the domestication of certain brutes. By stimulating the spontaneous fancy that things around man, whether animal or material, had feelings and could affect human life, Fetichism gave constant enlargement to sympathy in all its forms. We all know the violent emotions and passions common to all Fetichist races. And sympathy, in various forms, is the indispensable basis of all unions, whether of the family, of the tribe, or of the race; and these institutions are the primary conditions of civilisation. The formation of recognised families, tribes, or class is the indispensable condition of the origin of language, for all detached or isolated groups of human beings use articulate sounds which are merely language in the germ. And so, all the earlier inventions of mankind, the control of fire, the curing of skins, the making of clothes, weapons, the wheel, the cart, the boat, the culture of seeds—all these are the creation of Fetichism, and are directly due to the Fetichist conception of Nature and its nearness to Man. And all this was consolidated and stimulated when Fetichism evolved a religion of its own in the infinite forms of the primitive Worship of Nature.

This worship of Nature took its highest form when it was systematised into Astrology, a general term which covers worship of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, of the heavenly bodies and phenomena of all kinds, and which

in its highest generalisation is the grand Chinese worship of Heaven as the universal author of all human good. In that form, as we note in the history of China, the worship of the vast Heaven itself, not of any supposed Being or beings that inhabit it, we have a religion which has consolidated an unparalleled extent of population, has maintained itself unchanged for countless ages, and has produced many moral and social results. Now the Fetichist religion of Nature, in its most general and best type, has exercised profound influence on all succeeding forms of religion, and continues to modify the entire scheme of civilised habit. Our Calendar, our anniversary celebrations, our reverence for places, for the Dead, our maxims as to Light and Air, all witness to this survival of a thousand centuries.

Christendom has retained, along with the best ideas of Fetichism, some of the trivial and unprofitable practices it formed, without understanding their meaning, and quite debasing their use. Our rules about observing Easter, which are practically troublesome and still divide Christians, only date from primitive Fetichist superstitions about the phases of the Moon, which Mosaism incorporated, but which revolted the more spiritual Judaism of the Prophet Isaiah, who said: "Your new Moons my soul hateth." Yet to-day the whole of Christendom arranges its year by this Fetichist survival, which divides the Christians of the West from those of Eastern Europe. All our festivals, including the supposed anniversary of the birth of Christ, are

based on primitive observances of the Moon and of the Sun.

So, too, the Puritan conception of the Sabbath, with all its forbiddings, is a survival of Fetichist taboo foisted on to the Jewish seventh day of rest. Still more distinctly do Fetichist superstitions which once had admirable utility survive in the use of perpetual lamps burned before the image of the Madonna, in the use of candles on the "altar," for which even Protestants are ready to defy both Prelates and Judges. Still more visibly Fetichism—and Fetichism in its hideous side—survives in the Catholic and Evangelical conception of the "Lamb of God," the lamb being merely the sacrificial victim, which gradually superseded the human victim, whose blood was ceremonially poured out to rescue the worshippers from the vengeance of some terrestrial or celestial power. The entire hagiology or Hadology, and the Satanology of Christendom in all its forms, Catholic or Biblical, from Jerome and Tertullian down to Pio X or General Booth, the whole Bible of Hell, Satan, and demonology, in all its repulsive and savage developments, is just a survival of Fetichist superstition, which in its most ghastly form survives in Dahomey and Hayti.

Now turn to the nobler and permanent results of Fetichist ideas, and compare these with the Positivist system which incorporates them. Fetichism and Positivism are the only quite universal modes of solving the problems of life. All thought and all emotion took its

origin in Fetichist attempts to explain the external world and in Fetichist sympathy with beings and objects around self and reacting on self. Positivism embodies the universal conclusions of positive science on all these problems, and consecrates the natural human sympathy of primitive man. So, too, Fetichism gave the preponderance to Feeling, even in its crudity and its ignorance. Positivism secures the preponderance of the highest Feeling, when guided and enlightened by scientific knowledge. Fetichism instituted the great statical bases of human society—Family, Home, Marriage, Language, Property. All of these form the philosophic and religious bases of social union in Positive Sociology.

The reverence for the Dead, the consecration of the Past of Civilisation, which is the meaning and the basis of Humanity, is merely the philosophic and scientific embodiment of the primitive and universal Worship of Ancestors founded by Fetichism. This was developed and consolidated in China and in India, and adopted by Egypt and Rome with immense social efficacy which has too often degenerated into mischievous superstition. This reverence for the departed was purified and enlarged by mediæval Catholicism, too often, alas! with ignorant credulity and formalism. It has fallen into abeyance in modern times, and is at its lowest in Protestant nations. It remains in France almost the one relic of Catholic practice that survives. But this profoundly human and sympathetic institution has been taken up by Positivism for new efficacy in personal and

social morality. Our Calendar preserves it in typical form. And a body of Positivist institutions rests upon this noble sentiment.

Another characteristic of primitive Fetichism is respect and affection for the domestic brutes. This feeling, too, has been developed by Positivism, which is no mere sentiment of vague kindness of heart, but is the scientific expression of human gratitude for the higher brute world, without whose aid civilisation would be impossible. The useful animals man has reared and taught are "the allies of man." And Comte has gone so far as to speak of the "incorporation into Humanity of some of the nobler animals," and even, as was rudely and blindly done in the East, to admit the "sociable brutes" to typical religious ceremonies.

But the essence and universal note of Fetichism was the Worship of Nature, in countless forms and various values. The lower forms regarded stones, trees, rivers, mountains, springs—of which we are reminded by Stonehenge, the Kaaba, our Coronation stone in the Abbey, its stone altar, the oaks of Dodona and of Druids, the waters of Jordan, the Ganges, Parnassus, Helicon, and Fusi-yama. And the higher forms of this Nature worship are found in reverence for the Sun or the Moon, the Star of Bethlehem, the Zoroastrian worship of Fire, and in its grandest development in the Chinese worship of Heaven, and again in the mystical reverence for the Universe which is called Pantheism.

All this has deeply coloured poetry down from the



Bible and Homer or Virgil. The Psalms and the lyrics and prophecies are full of it, and it has no grander form than the familiar verse: "The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *West Wind* or *Sky-lark*, Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality* are exquisite examples. Nor has poetry any more lovely type of what Ruskin named "the pathetic fallacy," than Tennyson's "Old Yew" in *In Memoriam*, or the songs in *Maud*—"The lily whispers, 'I wait.' " All this familiar poetry is pure Fetichism.

To us to-day this love of Nature usually remains a vague poetic sentiment, with no more intellectual reaction than the joy of fine music, except so far as to some cultured and rationalist spirits, it serves as something they can regard as an attenuated religious sentiment in the absence of any positive belief. Now, with the philosophic world of Agnostics, it is often made a reproach to the Religion of Humanity that it centres the interests exclusively on Man, and has no thought for the vast universe around him, for the solar system and the infinite phenomena of Nature. Sceptics who for themselves, have abandoned all faith in creation, cannot admit any kind of religion as being possible unless it starts with a theory of the universe. It is indeed an obstacle to the reception of Positivism that it is too often thought to be concentrated exclusively on Man, and indifferent to the vast whole in which Man is a mite.

This criticism would be just if it were based on a fact.

But the religion of Humanity is not so restricted, so purely anthropocentric. It fulfils Kant's celebrated axiom: "The two things which strike awe into the soul are the moral law within us and the starry sky above us." It would indeed be a fatal defect of the religion of Humanity if it proscribed expansion of soul towards the visible world, the loveliness and the majesty of earth, the sublime spectacle of the Heavens by day and by night and the infinitude of the starry firmament. In these days when, in the decay of systematic dogma and authoritative creeds, many thinking men and women fall back on the vague, the indefinite, the mystical, as the only substitute for positive belief, just as they did in the decay of Polytheism (a tendency curiously illustrated by Christian Science, Faith-healing, and the Religion of the Unknowable), there is a proneness to regard the religion of Humanity as narrow, cribbed, cabined, and confined to Earth and Man.

There is no ground for this criticism. Positivism abundantly satisfies Man's inevitable and irrepressible yearning of soul to go forth towards the world around us, to feel the religious inspiration of a glorious sunset and the sense of mysterious Infinitude, when we gaze on the spectacle of Heaven and see the "Heavens break upwards to their highest." In the first place, Positivism gratefully accepts and honours all the immortal poetry of the past and the present. The Calendar and the Library place the poets in the very front place, and give them an almost predominant share in education.

No kind of poetry is omitted in either. Every work of Comte, his own religious practice, his scheme of popular education and of public worship is based upon this poetry of Nature, and insists on familiarity with it as a mental and moral discipline. But it does not rest on poetry or end with a taste for poetry.

In the Positivist scheme the World around us is duly regarded as an object of reverence, and the feeling is developed and maintained by appropriate ordinances and institutions. In his earliest works Comte was fully occupied with enlarging on the conception of Humanity, which is the essential basis and centre of religion. But in the final development of his scheme he amply opened a place for Nature as a whole, first for this Earth on which we live and on which we depend for existence, and then for the Infinite Environment which we cannot contemplate without a profound sense of humility, awe, and wonder. In his ultimate co-ordination of religious observance, Auguste Comte saw the presence of two dominant Forces outside Humanity—in some things alongside of Humanity, in some even contrasted and opposed to it, two Forces to which Humanity is related and on which it depends for every instant of its life and for every act of its energy.

These are: First, the Earth and all its contents and influences—the necessary stage and the implements of Man's activity. And next, the External World, the entire Environment, *i.e.*, Space—or the Universe.

Humanity must remain the essential, dominant, and vital object of our reverence, regard, gratitude, and trust. But it is in no sense unique, exclusive, absolute, as is the Creator of Theistic adoration. In every Theistic system the adoration of an Omnipotent Creator excludes any real adoration of the dust or the air which he has created. God and the spiritual beings whom he has allowed to be beside him fill the whole field of worship. The Earth, the Heaven, and the Stars in sacred hymnology only declare his glory. They cannot share it, nor draw off the attention of his worshippers. The magnificent XIXth Psalm—*Cæli enarrant*, after the most sublime hymn to Nature in all poetry, suddenly breaks off at verse 7 with: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"; and the rest of this grand hymn is addressed exclusively to God and his moral law of the soul.

But in a philosophy so real and so scientific as that of Positivism, no such *Monism* is possible. Everything is *dual*—the *ego* and the *non-ego*, the objective and the subjective, Man and the World, Man and Humanity, Induction and Deduction, Statics and Dynamics, Order and Progress, the Past and the Future, Man and Woman, Material and Spiritual. Positivism knows no absolute, metaphysical *Oneness*. Positivism rejects any Monistic creed, any Monistic philosophy or worship. It rejects even the Monism of Humanity. It would be unworthy of Humanity, to pretend to any independence whatever, any autonomy, to say nothing of any fantastic

autocracy, such as any type of Theism postulates, and whence come all its dilemmas.

Humanity, *ipso facto*, implies a being made up of infinitely numerous, different, and very imperfect beings—all dependent every instant of time on the earth on which they live and on the celestial circle in which they breathe. The slightest variations of either, the tearing and cracking of the earth's crust, or a new combination of the gases in the atmosphere, or a change in the rotation of the solar system might in an instant annihilate the entire human race. Humanity *implies* the earth and the solar system as truly as life implies a living body, as truly as light implies a base in force. This is not like the idea of God, or the hypothesis of an Unknowable. It is a visible, obvious, scientific, and demonstrable reality. It was no afterthought in Comte to discover or invent these two objects of reverence—the Earth and the World. They were always there, present to every mind. No man, be he philosopher, savage, or child, could imagine Humanity without assuming its dependence on the Earth and the World.

In his latest book Comte insisted that whilst regarding Humanity as the chief object of reverence and affection, we must not exclude the primeval delight of man in his Mother Earth, nor his ineradicable sense of mystery and awe as he looked up into the Heavens and pictured to himself that majestic Universe, whereof both Man and his Earth are mere motes, specks, fleeting dust, and bubbles. The religion of Humanity which in-

corporates the nobler order of brutes so necessary to man, so much akin to man, admits an ample extension of the same regard and affection to that wonderful Earth, the perennial source of beauty—the cradle, the home, the tomb of the human race. It consecrates that world of ours with a sense of poetic glory, of moral emotion—nay, of real religious reverence.

In the same way, it regards the Firmament on high with a sense of awe, somewhat different in kind, more sublime in its poetic inspiration, less touched with human sympathy than is our Earth, less definite, less comprehensible, but far richer in mystery, in immensity, more truly awful—if less lovable.

This is the true Nature worship—perfectly rational and practical—without pedantry or superstition. It opens a boundless field to the imagination. All the poetry of Pantheism is open to us as a religious inspiration; all the fantasy of primeval folklore, of earth and solar myths, of astral speculation, so long as it remains poetry, imagination, and conscious hypothesis.

The sentiment we have towards the Earth cannot be the same as that towards the Universe or Space. No man can pretend to love the Solar System. On the other hand, a starry night (as Kant says) fills us with a sense of sublime awe, such as we do not feel even amid the billows of the Atlantic or on the crest of Mont Blanc. Both differ essentially from the sense with which Humanity fills us. We are *of* Humanity and *in* it, flesh of its flesh, bone of its bone, life of its life. And

we feel towards it the affection, reverence, trust, that we feel towards parents, friends, and comrades. It would be affectation to feign such feeling towards any external and material world however sublime. We do not, like primitive or civilised Feticrists, hold spiritual converse with earth or sky, as do Polynesian savages or Chinese sages.

Humanity remains ever the primary, essential, permanent object of all healthy reverence and devotion. But it does not exclude—it cannot exclude—regard and awe from those two vaster but more distant powers, the Earth and the World, which are necessary to Humanity, which Humanity, in fact, implies as its very base—its *pou sto*—its medium and source of life.

These two co-ordinate conceptions open any conceivable field to the imagination, to poetry, even to mysticism, for those whose temperament inclines them to mystery. But there is nothing metaphysical about them, nothing unreal, hypothetical, fictitious. The Earth is as real as Man. So is the World without. The Starry Universe itself, with all its boundless possibilities of wonder and inquiry, is perfectly real. It is no subjective hypothesis. The Earth is a *fact*. The World is a *fact*. Humanity is a *fact*. Together they include all the facts of which we have scientific evidence, things about which no rational person doubts or disputes. These other objects of our reverence are all implied in Humanity, and are indispensable to Humanity. And the patriotic veneration we feel for Humanity is pro-

perly extended in a measure to its essential supports

Some who hear of Positivism for the first time may object that interest, regard, even awe, felt towards Earth and the World is a natural sentiment which all human poetry has recognised, but it is not religion, no akin to religion. They say: What has curiosity, fancy mysticism, about material Nature to do with religion. Can the poetical or the scientific state of mind about Nature compare with the Worship of an Omniscient Absolute, Omnipotent Being, who said: "Let there be light, and there was light"? Can this cool, practical attitude of human reason replace our prostration before a living Creator, who reads our thoughts and has commanded all things to be?

We have never said that Humanity could be compared with God, or could replace the idea of God. The two states of thought are distinct. If the belief in an Omnipotent Creator were still a living and efficient guide to conduct and human life, we should have heard little of a religion of Humanity. It is because philosophers have whittled away this belief to a set of unintelligible conundrums about Unknowables, Unimaginables; because cultivated minds now hover in a vague type of Pantheism or in metaphysical vocables to which they attach no definite meaning, that Positivism is striving to found something at once real, definite, and sympathetic as the object of our highest aspirations.

Humanity is not Absolute, nor Perfect, nor Omniscient, nor Omnipotent, and thus is happily not charge-



able with that for which Omniscience and Omnipotence must be responsible. Nor does it exclude all other objects of gratitude and reverence. It is indeed a glorified form of what we mean by Patriotism. It is a vast extension of patriotism to the whole human brotherhood. It is the sense of love and devotion to the Fatherland of us all, to the countrymen of the human race. And of such a patriotism, respect for the Earth and for the World is a wholesome and natural part.

## CHAPTER V.

### POLYTHEISM

I PROCEED, in my systematic study of the moral and social efficacy of various religions, to consider that of Polytheism—the worship of many gods—which everywhere has succeeded the worship of Nature, and prepares the way for Monotheism, the worship of one deity.

It will be observed that the long evolution of religion is a gradual concentration, limitation, and definition of the religious instinct of reverence and submission. It first expands vaguely to all forms of Nature. Then it personifies special natural forces. At last it imagines a single power in the universe. Finally, it must turn to the chief power visible on our earth.

In Polytheism the more salient phases of Man and of Nature are endowed with personality and a superhuman power and spirit. We call it Paganism, and are apt to think it an obsolete superstition of classical times, as if Polytheism were concerned only with Jupiter and Juno, Mars and Venus. The contrary is true. From historic times Polytheism is far the oldest, most widely spread, most enduring of human religions. It was the religion of ancient Egypt for at least 5,000 years and probably double that time. And for the same vast period we can trace it in Asia. It was the religion of Greece for quite 1,000 years down to the time of Con-

stantine and even of Justinian. It was the religion of Rome for more than 1,000 years. It was the religion of the European races down to the early Middle Ages, even to the time of Charles and Alfred. It was the religion of India for countless ages, and is still held by 200,000,000 Hindoos, having survived and expelled Buddhism.

Polytheism is the ancient religion of Japan and of nearly all Asiatic races in their primitive state, except that of China. Confucianism is a highly organised Fetichism; but socially and morally it is allied to Polytheism by recognising various providential powers, though these are not spiritualised or personified. In Asia and in Africa, in Europe and America, wherever there is an organised state with a fairly high civilisation of its own, Polytheism prevails until Monotheism is introduced by conquest or by missionaries. The one great exception is China, which remains a religion of Nature; but a religion of Nature highly modified by the worship of several powers having local seats and special influence.

In fact, after all these centuries since Moses little more than one-third of the human race are Monotheists. Polytheists are more numerous than any others except the Chinese Fetichists.

No Monotheism, except the Mosaic in one small and dispersed race, has ever had anything like the continuity and vast antiquity of many forms of Polytheism. No form of Monotheism has been so widely dispersed over

the human race, and seems so natural to the human mind in the earlier phases of civilisation.

I am not recommending Polytheism, but showing that, historically and sociologically, it covers a vast proportion of the ground in the religious history of mankind.

I turn to that striking analysis of Comte which has puzzled so many, but is one of the most signal instances of his profound genius.

In his "Polity" he says: "Polytheism is the most characteristic, most important, most durable, and most efficacious form which the theological type of religion has ever taken. The worship of one deity never has, and never can, produce so potent a type of religion as the worship of *many* deities has done and does. Monotheism in all its forms, Mosaic, Christian, Mussulman, Protestant, Catholic, Deist, does not exercise over the whole nature and life of man an influence so constant, so varied, so direct as Polytheism in its full vigour and perfection."

Monotheism is a degeneration, in one sense, a decline of theology, a shrinkage and falling away of the divine inspiration. Such is the startling paradox which Comte maintains.

Of course, we fully admit that in many respects Monotheism is both intellectually and socially a great advance on the whole, and especially that it is—or rather opens the ground for—a great moral and spiritual advance.

So too, we entirely accept the truism that Monotheism is a nobler type of religion, an indispensable phase of human evolution, infinitely more fitted to inspire purity and moral exaltation of nature, and far more reconcilable with the whole intellectual field.

No one doubts that the religion of St. Paul was a far grander ideal than the religion of Homer; that St. Bernard's ideal of spiritual morality was a higher type than that of Æschylus or Virgil. No one disputes that. But still Polytheism exercised a wider, more general, more spontaneous influence over the entire field of human life and activity than any other form of theology.

In Polytheism every aspect of Nature, every change in the physical conditions around, every act of daily life, every instinct of humanity, had its own personal, indwelling divine being, graduated, organised, but always active and manifesting its presence. The sun, the moon, stars, earth, air, clouds, rivers, fountains, sea, mountains, trees, flowers, animals—all had special divinities. Agriculture, vintage, seafaring, voyaging, boundaries, tombs, gates, statues, houses, hearths, chambers, etc., etc.—all were consecrated to some divinity, often very humble, local, simple, but superhuman and ideal. Libations, meals, omens, every act of life, weighing in scales, measuring a distance, founding a house, beginning a journey, had divine protectors.

It may be said that the devout Christian, Jew or Mussulman, constantly says his prayers, and meditates on the Almighty continually. But he cannot realise

that the Almighty stands by him as he fills his pitcher, or watches at his father's tomb, or takes personal note of his landmark, or makes his vineyard "a good year," or measures out his corn or his cloth. The Almighty Creator is *ex hypothesi* too grand, too far off, too sublime, to interfere in this. There was in the Middle Ages a sort of spurious Polytheism in saints, etc. So there is now in South Italy, in Poland, in Russia, in Turkey, in Persia. Even the most fervent Catholic or Mussulman does not to-day see the manifestation of the Creator in every little incident of his daily life. He does not think that God smiles on him when he returns to his fireside, or lies down to rest beside his wife, or pledges a friend in a bumper, or goes to market, or when he girds on his helmet and sword. But the Polytheist did this, and does do it. The very dignity, sublimity and immensity of the Almighty as conceived by Jews, Christians, Mussulmans and Deists precluded the thought of His taking personal note of the daily routine of life. The vast bulk of the daily acts of ordinary civil life, its industry, its food, household cares, its marketing, its amusements, its pleasures—possibly innocent, but often vulgar—*cannot* be felt by the sincere Monotheist to be such as can interest the Almighty, or give Him pleasure or awaken His providential care. Hence in Catholic and Mussulman peoples the crowd of saints, spirits, genii, etc., and in Protestant people the divorce of religion from daily life. Of course, this divine inspiration of life, this surrounding of daily existence with a special

divinity was often a much less pure, less intense thing than is the highest form of Monotheism. But it was a far more constant and omnipresent act of deity. Perhaps St. Bernard or St. Francis did realise hour by hour the *omnipresence* of God. But they became hermits. We talk about it; but only a special and spiritual nature, in an ecstatic mood, can do it. A Mussulman Imam may do it; perhaps Isaiah or Ezekiel did. But David and Solomon certainly did not. The Polytheist, even in a comparatively high form of civilisation, the Egyptians under their kings and priests, the Greeks from Homer down to Plutarch (1,000 years), the Romans from Numa to M. Aurelius, saw a divine afflatus surrounding every act of life.

On this ground Comte calls Polytheism the most characteristic, most important, most spontaneous and most permanent form of theology. Monotheism is a transition, a kind of decadence of theology, but a *decadence* only in the sense of a decay of energy and narrowing of the field. No one denies that it is more pure, more ennobling, and, from the moral side of life, far more spiritual, more intellectual, more scientific.

Polytheism is an inferior grade, but a more effective one, the *principal*, central, normal type of theology.

I.—*Universality of Polytheism.*—Every visible thing had an appropriate divine being inside it, immanent in it and presiding over its activity. Every river, fountain, sea, mountain, cloud, wind, had its own God. Every girl filling her pitcher invoked the local Nymph.

The sea was peopled with Nereids, Tritons, Proteids; the woods with Dryads, Nymphs, Fauns, Satyrs; the mountains with Oreads, with dæmons; the underground with Titans, Giants, Cyclops; the air with Mercuries, with Aurora, Iris, Ares, Aphrodite, Artemis, Bacchus, Ceres, Flora, Pomona, Vesta, Graces, Muses, Fates, Furies, Heroes.

As we read Homer, Æschylus and the tragedians, or Virgil or Plutarch, Pliny or Pausanias, we see that every manifestation of Nature, every activity of man, every habit of civilised life was presided over by a divine being, often very simple and humble. This is a most beautiful, and, to scholars, the most familiar, type of Polytheism. But any ordinary handbook of myths would show analogous deities in Egyptian, Hindoo, Norse, Teutonic theology.

To the devout Polytheist his common operations were spontaneous acts of special worship, perpetually kept alive by a constant renewal of form and object. The world of imagination filled a far larger part of life than in ours. This stimulated Art, but not Science. Science made no great way under Polytheism except in Greece; and then because the higher intellects rejected a gross Polytheism and tended to an unconscious Monotheism.

Much of this Polytheism everywhere tended to wild fantasy and coarse extravagance, and was always based on Fetichist materialism. In Positivism the analogous idea is the scientific understanding of Nature, for each aspect of Nature recalls to us to-day the history of



Science, the discoveries of the laws of Nature, all of which are elements of religious reverence.

To the Greek, Olympus and Eleusis and Parnassus had deities as inhabitants; to the Roman the Mons Sacer, the Tiber, Palatine and Capitol hills, had a sacred character which gave a religious stimulus to their national life. To the Monotheist these were blank. To the Positivist they are invested with all the halo of poetry, tradition and history. The Acropolis, the Capitol, the Tiber, the Nile, the island of Salamis have memories which, if less fantastic than those of Greeks and Romans, are more real and more truly inspiring.

To the ardent Monotheist devotee a lovely sunrise, an enchanting landscape are earthly visions which draw off his thoughts from the Divine Effulgence. It is poetry, not Religion. To the Positivist, they recall a thousand passages in verse and prose. To the Positivist, instructed in the laws of Nature and the history of Science, a rainbow records, not Iris, not the Noachian Deluge, but poets, the discovery of the principles of refraction—Newton, Huyghens and Helmholtz. “The Heavens declare the glory of Kepler, Galileo, and Newton,” says Comte—a religious idea, real, socially and morally stimulating.

To the Polytheist every act of civilised life had its appropriate divine sanction. To the Positivist also the essential domestic, civic and social functions have a religious sanction. The Positivist Sacraments show that they are directly inspired and ennobled by the conscious-

ness of social and moral duty to the Human Providence they serve.

II.—The great practical feature of Polytheism was that it gave a religious inspiration and stimulus to each of the powers of action and energies of life. It did this in a most irregular and violent way, without control, system or decency. War, love, rule, adventure, poetry, art were all idealised and sanctified by their presiding deities. Vast achievements and unbridled passions were the rule.

Now in Positivism the essence of the Religion of Humanity consists in establishing a due control over the propensities—not crushing and distorting most of them, as so often happens in Monotheism—but in making Religion to consist in a systematic working of social morality. Polytheism gives an irregular stimulus to all passions. Monotheism wages one-sided and fanatical war on most of them, and therefore fails. Positivism ratifies by a religious sanction a scientific ethic.

III.—Polytheism, as is often said, introduced and made possible the institution of priesthood in the widest sense of the term—*i.e.*, intellectual and moral authorities. In Theocratic Polytheism these were very powerful; in Greek and Roman times they were mainly formal. Catholic Monotheism greatly extended this institution and modified it, separating the temporal and spiritual authorities and forming a real *Church*. No real Church has existed except in Catholic ages. Both types of priesthood presented profound defects and gross

evils. (a) Polytheism mixed up temporal and spiritual authority, confounding *Rule* and *Advice*, *Law* and *Worship*, the evils of which are more or less perpetuated in the Greek Church and Islam. Both are ruinous to society. (b) The Catholic priesthood, whilst recognising the contrast between government by the State and guidance by the Church, limited the action of the Church to purely transcendental things except for a short time in the Middle Ages. It did not affect to guide or advise in the real things, the solid and practical concerns of life. And when it did interfere in such things it did so in supreme ignorance, and usually in the way of sect and to secure its own privileges or gain.

Positivism, *per contra*, whilst insisting on intellectual and moral guidance in an organised form, entirely separate from all temporal authority, and without any force or legal power, is far more completely divorced from power than any Christian priesthood. It insists on a general scientific and philosophic education and on the competence of moral teachers, who without ever presuming to command or appeal to *force*, may restrain passions and selfishness, and constantly recall citizens, rich or poor, to a sense of social duty, forbearance and peace.

IV.—Polytheism is distinguished above all religions by its spirit of tolerance, by its respect for national and tribal religions as opinions, or where they were not made a source of<sup>2</sup> insurrection—as was often done by Jews, Egyptians, and Britons. No intolerance and fanatical

exclusiveness existed in Greece or Rome. Paul spoke freely before the Areopagus at Athens. Rome admitted Serapis, Jews and Christians, until it found Christianity a sort of public treason. Rome had no proselytism, no denunciation of heathens, no persecution or attempts at extirpation of heresy, apart from treason.

This is a noble record of Polytheism if compared with the crimes that have stained Catholicism, Protestantism, Mussulman, Buddhist religions. Polytheism admitted infinite variety of doctrine, creed and worship, encouraged and incorporated them, and stimulated civic union and respect for opinion everywhere. Positivism effects this purpose far more completely and on a coherent system. It incorporates the permanent parts of each faith; and sees in each profound historical meanings and social uses. The Religion of Humanity can no more insult or seek to persecute an earlier phase of thought than a rational man in his old age despises and condemns the serious beliefs of his own youth and manhood. He may have grown out of them, and may have enlarged them. But he knows well out of what they arose and to what good ends they led.

The Religion of Humanity finally closes the long blood-red roll of persecution with its record of stupidity, cruelty and arrogance. Positivism only can close it. For every *absolute* creed is bound by its nature to be aggressive and arrogant. It is only the *relative* creed that can be truly tolerant, really human.

V.—Turn to the system of Apotheosis in the ancient

world of Polytheism—Hero Worship—*e.g.*, Theseus, Romulus, Numa, Æneas, eponymous Patrons, Demi-gods. This was extended to Alexander, Julius, Augustus, with the Imperial *numen*. It was often grossly abused, as all such deifications will be; it was akin to the Canonisation of Catholics. But it was free from the gross defects of Catholic Canonisation, which made saints out of the most abject fanatics—*e.g.*, S. Simon Stylites, S. Anthonys, etc., etc.—which was always confined to superhuman qualities, such as piety, self-torture and absurd extravagance. Polytheistic Apotheosis at least admitted great leaders of men, real heroes and human demi-gods. Both forms of canonisation were defective. Polytheism omitted women. One became too often an immoral and barbarous form of servility; the other became a fanatical superstition. Both introduced reverence for great men. The Positivist Calendar gives honour to the great men and women of the past in due order.

VI.—On the other hand, the morality of Polytheism was essentially defective in personal restraint of passions, especially in its sexual relations and domestic habits. Worst of all in its sanction of slavery, with all its hideous evils to the master and mistress of youths and girls. It was this ingrained corruption of personal life which caused and justified the revolutionary movement of Paul and his people. Vice was directly encouraged by Polytheism. But, unfortunately, the Christian reformation, in its frantic extravagance seeking to

glorify *purity* at the cost of everything else, thirsting to extirpate the bloodiness, the insolence and tyranny of corrupt Polytheism, sadly neglected the grand old heathen virtues of courage in war, energy, discipline, civic patriotism, and all the great gifts of a Pericles, an Epaminondas, of Scipio, Julius, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius. Men like these, with all their faults, were far truer saints, far nearer to the Religion of Humanity than the wretched monks of Mount Athos or the Apennines, who lived a life of useless self-torture and babbled about Virginitv and Poverty as the highest manifestations of human virtue. Now Positivism, which insists on personal purity and self-control as much as any Catholic confessor, will not tolerate any extravagance and falsification of the ethical synthesis, even for this end. It asserts an all-round Morality wherein the old manly virtues of the antique heroes have their due place; courage, tenacity, energy, civic loyalty, social discipline, patriotism, justice, toleration. These things (the great legacy of Plutarch's Heroes) they ought to have done—and not to have left the other undone.

VII.—The great characteristic of Polytheism was its limitless field for imagination. It gave us the inexhaustible mythology of Greece and Rome and the sublime works of ancient art and poetry. We owe every single type of literature to the Polytheistic world: Epic, Drama, Comedy, Tragedy, Hymn, Lyric, Epigram, History, Biography, Philosophy, Essay, Satire, Oratory, Romance. They reached the highest type in

all but Romance. So in art: everything almost is due to the Ancients, except probably in Music and Painting.

No doubt the Christian world and Monotheism generally has had its own splendid triumphs which we need not underrate. But the great triumph of the Renaissance (say from Michelangelo to Milton and Corneille) was a reasoned return upon antique modes of thought; and so is most of the art and poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Positivism will free poetry, art, and life from the narrowness, bigotry, and ascetic superstition of Catholic and Protestant dogmatism, and will return upon the free, humane, jovial, æsthetic temper of the Polytheist—but without the scandalous impurity, the wild self-indulgence, and the easy allowance of almost any vice, which was the damning dry-rot of the ancient world.

The Positivist honour paid to Humanity will resist these evils as stoutly as ever any mediæval priest, monk, or inquisitor. But it will tolerate no crusades, no wars of religion, no hell, no monasticism, no inhuman asceticism. It will look for a world of humane fellowship, and intellectual enjoyment of all things wholesome, beautiful, and loving—a stronger, braver, and more social world—and certainly a world purer than that of Homer and Aristophanes, but happier than that of Hildebrand, Bernard, and Dante.

## CHAPTER VI

### CATHOLICISM

POLYTHEISM was the principal, the characteristic and permanent form of theology, and so Catholicism was the principal, the characteristic, the most permanent form of Christianity. It was very much more. Catholicism is the only serious, enduring, organic form of Christianity. All others are perversions, reversions, transitions, morbid and sterile offshoots and after-growths of Christianity. Catholicism is the only historic type, the only type of which, in a large human view of the Past or of the Present, we need take account. Comte says (Phil. II., Chap. ix.) that he prefers the term Catholicism to Christianity as being more distinctive, more universal, and it involves no person as founder. Everyone knows what a Catholic is, but the wisest cannot say what a Christian is—stretching from the primitive convert to the pure Deist.

On the other hand, Comte considers the term Christianity as being wider. But it is too vague to be sociologically distinctive. Comte never speaks of Christianity, but of Catholicism. Modern Catholicism he calls Jesuitism.

Though Polytheism is the most widely spread, the most spontaneous, the most efficient type of theology, we have pointed out its moral and spiritual weakness, or rather its deplorable moral failure, and we feel strongly



the higher spiritual and moral elevation of Monotheism. A religion often becomes nobler and purer whilst losing its area and power to affect masses. This is the case with modern Buddhism in contrast with Hindoo Polytheism and Chinese Confucianism.

As Monotheism is a decadence or shrinkage from Theologism, so Catholicism is a decadence from primitive Christianity, while Protestantism is a shrinkage from Catholicism, as Deism is a shrinkage from Protestantism and Agnosticism a shrinkage from Deism.

The Polytheist, in the condition of Homer or Herodotus, is far more saturated with the sense of the omnipresence of Divine forces round him than is even Dante or Chaucer, just as the pilgrims at Lourdes feel themselves to be more continually in the presence of God than do those who met in Exeter Hall; and Providence plays a larger part in the life of the congregations of General Booth than in the congregations of Mr. Voysey.

Needless to say, we do not recommend Catholicism as a religion now. Its great services are historic. Its vast social influence is independent of its creed, and even operates in spite of its creed. But, looking at it from the standpoint of human history, it presents the greatest moral step ever taken in the whole course of evolution.

We could not say this of the Sermon on the Mount or the Parables, but of the Catholic Church, and mainly in the centuries from Augustine to Dante. It is no more possible to go back to those centuries than it would be to return to Zeus and Aphrodite.

I speak of Catholicism, not of Christianity. Catholicism is a religion, a Church, a creed, a discipline. It is a religion.

Christianity, in the loose acceptation of the term, including Unitarian variations, is not a religion but a metaphysical idea, a moral idea, an aspiration, a hope, a sentiment; often very beautiful, often consoling, often efficient in well-prepared or sympathetic natures, but not in strict philosophy a religion. Plato's doctrine of Eternal Ideas is not a religion, nor is Buddha's idea of Nirvana, nor is Agnosticism or The Unknowable.

Socialism is not a political system; it is an idea, a hope, a sentiment, an ideal. So Christianity, in its present essence, is really a noble dream, a spiritual and moral Utopia, but not a religion. Catholicism *is a religion*. It has a Church, an organisation, a priesthood, a government, a discipline, a definite worship, and a dogmatic creed.

Comte insists that St. Paul, rather than Christ, is the founder of Christianity. Nothing less like Christ's idea can be imagined than the Church at Rome under Gregory or Hildebrand. But Paul taught Catholicism in germ; and Gregory only amplified and systematised Paul's ideas, as we find them in Corinthians and Romans.

Until a Church was founded in the fourth century A.D., in the age of Athanasius, Jerome, Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Basil, the beautiful quietism of the Sermon on the Mount and St. John's Gospel might have

evaporated like the beautiful ideas of Pythagoras, Apollonius, Epictetus, Bonaventura, or Joachim, and scores of mystics in East and West.

The key of Catholicism is an organised and spiritual power, and to-day it is the only phase of Christianity which possesses this.

This brings us to the heart of the moral and spiritual revolution made by Catholicism.

The great instrument was an independent spiritual authority. This is an abstract and almost technical term. What does it mean?

It means an organised body of men who aimed at giving an intellectual, moral, and emotional education to the society around them.

The term "spiritual" is used in the widest sense, intellectual and moral—all that is not practical, active, political, industrial, material. It includes all that relates to thinking, knowing, believing, persuading, and inspiring affection and enthusiasm. Old men, teachers, the learned, women as a sex, represent spiritual influences.

Of course there have always been some spiritual guides in every society. Even in a tribe of hunters there are wise men, medicine men, holy men, as well as chiefs and warriors. In Homeric times there were such priests as Nestor, Calchas, Tiresias. In Egypt and in all true theocracies, whether Polytheistic or Monotheistic, the spiritual authority held sway or controlled the kings. In Greece and Rome the chiefs held sacred offices or

priesthoods and controlled the priests. A Roman general regarded his augurs as part of his own staff.

Greek philosophers wanted to exercise political despotism, and Plato would have turned society upside-down.

The great invention of Catholicism was an independent, co-ordinate, moral authority that could defy, restrain, and modify the political rulers. "Take no thought for the morrow," Christ said: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Paul said, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." This is a rather extravagant quietism. But by the fourth century A.D. there was a Catholic Church. It made at first little attempt to give an intellectual training. It concentrated its whole force on moral training.

Two great results followed.

(1) The new position of women, and, as a consequence, the purification of the home.

(2) The elevation of the labouring mass, the gradual extinction of slavery, then of serfdom, and ultimate enlargement to a social Utopia, which even to-day rests largely on the Catholic Utopia. These results, the most important and blessed in the range of human evolution, were the work of the Catholic Church. The independence of the Spiritual Power was a long and obstinate struggle, stained on both sides by crimes and follies, and never succeeding except with such exceptional men as Lanfranc, Anselm, St. Bernard, Hugh Grossetête, Suger, Langton, etc., etc. But the idea had been founded. We now have intellectual guides, moral

guides, religious guides absolutely independent of any ruler, or government, or parliament, and yet exercising a vast intellectual and moral authority. They take all forms—*e.g.*, C. Darwin, Carlyle, Comte, Spencer, Tennyson, Keble, Pusey, General Booth, even Mr. Gladstone, John Morley, Karl Marx. All do represent spiritual authority—*i.e.*, intellect, real moral guidance. What they say of right or wrong sinks into public opinion, modifies it. Literature, the pulpit, the press, the lecture-hall represent the moral influence.

The great characteristic of modern society as contrasted with ancient, of Western as contrasted with Eastern civilisation, is that *here* and *now* we always have a wide, earnest, free body of men appealing to conscience, to moral and social duty, often in most divergent ways and on contradictory principles, but with power, and utterly indifferent to what rulers or magistrates choose to ordain. Carlyle is a really typical case. He was often wrong, but always earnest and serious, absolutely defiant of laws, rulers, social habits. That is a modern, a Western idea. Its origin is traceable to the Catholic Church. The Church was utterly inadequate for its task, but it made the attempt, and it made a force thoroughly organised, systematic and independent.

Even the extravagance, the intellectual incoherence and quietism of the Christian doctrine contributed to this end. When Christ said "Turn the left cheek," "Take no thought for the morrow," "Bless them that

curse you," He introduced a temper of utter detachment from all material and temporal things, often no better than that of a Buddhist bonze or an Indian Yoghi; but it enabled some great organising genius like Augustine, or Gregory, or Ambrose to say "We care not what becomes of the State, or public life, or material society; we care only for Heaven, to be reached by moral purification."

This separation—*i.e.*, the foundation of an organised Church—says Comte, "was the greatest advance ever made in the general theory of the social organism." It was a transitional instrument, not a permanent settlement. The spiritual authority has as its function—Education. The temporal authority has as its function—Action. Each is supreme in its own sphere. Catholicity involves a religious and moral bond, one far more practicable and more moral than a forced political unity. Catholicity is far superior to imperial unity, but far inferior to Humanity, owing to its exclusive and absolute creed. All forms of Protestantism or Sectarianism, Anglicanism and all national religions, the Orthodox (*i.e.*, exclusive) Greek Community, Unitarians, Deists rest on logical truth, or Bible revelation, or Natural Philosophy; but they ostentatiously reject, cynically despise, the Catholicity which at any rate Catholics claim and respect. Besides, as a matter of fact, the Pope is real as well as nominal head of 175,000,000 souls—nearly half the Christian world, reaching from Poland to Cadiz, from Donegal to Sicily,

South America, 12,000,000 in the United States, and millions scattered throughout Asia and the Transatlantic Continent.

It is quite true that this claim of Catholicity remains, and always must remain, a barren claim; for, as Comte showed, the failure of the Third Crusade at the close of the twelfth century proved how utterly visionary was the idea that either of the great forms of Monotheism could absorb the other; and Christianity itself for five centuries even then had been split in two, and for four or five centuries since Luther it has been split into three.

Still, the claim of Catholicity is a noble thing, even if a hopeless dream. This in itself is a matter of deep importance to us. Naturally, from the human point of view, a religion which neither claims to be nor conceivably could be co-extensive with mankind is no religion at all. I waste no words on the contradictory farce that calls itself anglo-Catholic. One might as well say British-Cosmopolitan, or Municipal-Imperial. No creed can possibly be really Catholic except the creed of Humanity. But Catholicism is at least an aspiration in that direction.

It is quite true that the independent spiritual power which Catholicism claimed to establish was very, very imperfectly attained. Ambrose, Gregory, Hildebrand, St. Bernard, Lanfranc, Becket, the Friars proved that it was a reality from the fourth to the fourteenth century, and it is still not wholly extinct.

The incoherent creed and preposterous pretensions inherent in Catholicism drove it, from the moment that heresy began to be rife, into unholy alliances with kings. Thus we have all the enormities of persecutions, St. Bartholomew, Alva, Louis XIV, etc., etc., all through the epoch from fifteenth to nineteenth century. But though the Papacy has been forced, for centuries almost, to identify itself with Monarchy and to cling round the skirts of tyrants, this is not quite of its essence. Leo XIII or Pio X to-day do not cling to Monarchy or tyrants. The Church is friendly with American Republicans; it is utterly hostile to Monarchy and aristocratic government in Italy and in Germany. Its history in Poland, in Ireland, in England, in the United States in this century shows that it still can aim at a moral influence, restraining politicians, modifying oppression in governments, and boldly protecting the weak.

The precarious and irrational basis involved in any absolute theological, and therefore fictitious, doctrine prevents Catholicism from doing this, the primary duty of any real Church—*i.e.*, protecting the weak and restraining the selfishness of power. But compare Catholicism with other creeds. The servile spiritual bureaucracy called the Greek Church, which, from the days of Justinian to those of Nicholas II, is a mere black police under the orders of the Czar and the Czar's agents. Compare it with the Anglican Church, a mere department of State, the mere party caucus of Conservative



politicians. Compare it even with orthodox Dissent, too often on the side of wealth. Compare it even with Quakerism, the most independent and essentially moral of all the Dissidents: the weight of Quakerism goes spontaneously towards prosperity.

The great primary work of Catholicism was—

- (a) In raising the condition of woman.
- (b) Improving domestic life.
- (c) Restraining and purifying the sexual instinct.
- (d) Modifying the power of husband and father.

Read the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, with its words, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." Compare this with the satires of Horace and Juvenal, with the state of the Roman world under Nero, and we see the moral revolution that this implied. Read any early father—Augustine, Tertullian, Jerome—and the lives of early saints and martyrs. We can understand how noble men and women came to proclaim that chastity was the central, almost unique virtue of both sexes, and to feel that until the moral pollution was stemmed nothing was done, nothing need be thought of.

It may well be that the virtue of chastity was exaggerated and became mystical and inhuman, and that even with St. Paul himself, as when he preferred the state of virginity. But the work was done, and Catholicism did effect the miracle of converting a society sunk in the foulest corruption into one with a passionate ideal of sexual purity.

sympathetic figments, for they must end in collapse and disgust when found out.

The central Catholic institution is the Mass. "The most admirable of the Catholic institutions, the Mass, which condensed in one mystical rite the doctrine, the discipline, and the worship of the religion," says Comte. He adds, "It was so shocking to common sense that it was always repulsive to over speculative minds, whilst it awoke distressing doubts even in the best hearts."

THE MASS (*i.e.*, *missa est*) is the constant and visible sacrifice of Christ, the daily re-incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity, the re-materialisation of Christ. This is obviously a mystery, a symbol, rather a miracle—a daily miracle. Christianity, like all forms of theology, is a religion of extravagances. Its palpable, enormous extravagance need not detain us.

By it the atonement and sacrifice by Jesus is more vividly presented than by any words. Protestants with difficulty realise the Mass. It is not a representation of the sacrifice, but the actual sacrifice; not a symbol, but an event, a miraculous fact, as if the miracle of the "loaves and fishes" were repeated.

The material incorporation of Christ with Humanity and the spiritual incorporation of the worshipper with Christ was the central idea of Christianity, and it was unquestionably the central spring of its moral power as a religion.

All the purifying and ennobling force of the Christian ideal centred in this communion of the Human and

Much was largely due to civil organisation, Feudalism, chivalry, romance, etc., etc.

In our age, in most modern societies morality is due to an independent sense of duty, and very partially to religion of any kind. On the whole, in the decay of theology religion retains, no doubt, more influence over personal than social morality, more effect on domestic than on national morality. I am willing to believe that the good influence still surviving in Catholicism is more active and useful than that which survives in any non-Catholic Christianity. And this is due mainly to the worship of the Virgin and to the Confessional. All this problem is closely connected with the celibacy of the clergy.

Let us look at this remarkable institution historically. In spite of all its manifest evils and its truly inhuman fanaticism, I incline to think that it was the only way in the early centuries that Christianity could have been founded, detaching the priesthood from the world, preventing it from becoming an hereditary caste and from being absorbed in the world and the social life of the lay society.

We see the result in the Muscovite priesthood and in the Anglican and other Protestant priesthoods. A married priesthood stimulates the sinking of a priesthood into the laity. The inevitable tendency is for their families to become mere appendages of the upper and middle-class capitalist orders. Of course, I believe that if the future is to have a priesthood of any kind, it will

be, and must be, a married priesthood. The inevitable laicising and secularising tendency of marriage must be otherwise counteracted. A priesthood rigidly separated from wealth may be married without bad results; but the celibacy of the clergy was needed in the mediæval world to make a clerical army. Theology could no more have organised a married priesthood than Feudalism could have disciplined a married soldiery. And, again, a celibate priesthood stimulated the Confessional as an institution, and that still acts as a moral power.

We come now to the central and characteristic dogma of Catholicism—Mariolatry. We are not troubled with the invectives and sneers of Protestants about the absurdity and the impiety of worshipping a Syrian girl as Mother of God. To us this is not more absurd nor more impious than worshipping a Syrian youth as God.

No doubt Mariolatry, which grew up in Latin Christianity by degrees, and hardly became the central Christian dogma till the thirteenth century, is a decadence or shrinkage from the primitive Gospel, from Christolatry. No doubt modern Catholicism is Mariolatry pure and simple—at any rate since Protestantism began, and in the last century or two, since the decay of Christianity, this has made Catholicism the religion of women rather than of men.

But, as Comte very acutely points out, Mariolatry is a transition towards reverence for Humanity.

How can any Positivist, standing and speaking under

the image of the Sistine Mother and Child—the most lovely creation of Christian art, which to us represents Humanity and its future—how can he undervalue the worship of the Madonna which so unconsciously, so naturally, so beautifully symbolises the transition to a frank and scientific reverence (I will not use the term “worship”) for the incarnate goodness—Love, Maternity, Humanity?

Yes! looking at the moral and social reaction—that is, the influence for good on the human conscience and on societies and nations—of the worship of Christ and the worship of Mary, I think, on the whole, the latter has had the purer and nobler influence, has been most free from crime and perversion, and has still the most power to soften passion and humanise life.

How many bloody wars, how much persecution, how great a tyranny have been carried on in the name of the Prince of Peace! I doubt if the Virgin Mother is responsible for so much blood, such agonies, such devastation.

I do not believe that modern society, on the whole, is now very deeply transformed by idealising the example of either Christ or the Virgin Mother. The great modern problems are international justice, economic justice, and conscience as between Capital and Labour, rich and poor, altruism as against egoism. I cannot see that the love of Christ or of the Virgin very deeply modify the inherent selfishness, pride, and avarice of human nature. But in the home, in cultivating a spirit

of tenderness—especially in women—in stimulating charitableness, I think the image of Mary the Mother is, on the whole, now more potent than the image of Christ on the Cross. The Sermon on the Mount, the Parables, the Vicarious Sacrifice and Atonement are now so utterly incommensurable with modern society, practical and industrial life, and rational and scientific morality, that Christolatry has lost its *raison d'être*; and in the dregs and decay of Christendom, Mariolatry, working on a smaller field, is a more efficient religious stimulus.

Let us rest assured that the worship of Mary offers a very easy and natural transition to reverence for Humanity; and, as our Calendar institutes reverence for the memory of St. Monica, St. Geneviève, Elizabeth of Hungary, Jeanne d'Arc, it is really only a step from the Mother of Nazareth to any of these idealised but historic mothers of Humanity. That brings me to the whole problem of Hagiology—the “worship of saints”—with which Protestants so absurdly arraign Catholics.

No doubt the worship of saints was a modified reversion to Polytheism, a counterpart or analogue to Polytheism—well, but why not? It was in one sense a decadence from Monotheism—*i.e.*, a derogation from the absolute Deity of the Almighty. Well, again I say, why not?

It was a very natural, right, and beautiful transition towards our Positivist worship of saints, which is merely

reverence for the memory of great benefactors, or great examples of human goodness, power, truth, and beauty. In the Positivist Calendar more than sixty names are in the Catholic Calendar, or are great teachers or rulers of the Catholic Church, such as Borromeo, or Fénelon, or Bossuet. Both Mariolatry and the worship of the saints did much, and still do much, to humanise, to localise, to make adaptable, to socialise and make beautiful the bare Monotheism of Christianity and the transcendental contradictories and mystical metaphysics of the Athanasian Creed, with its Trinity and exclusive salvation.

In the next Essays I propose to return to this great problem of Catholicism, and will deal with the institutions of Catholicism:—

- (a) The Mass.
- (b) The Confessional.
- (c) Celibacy of the Priesthood.
- (d) Monks and Nuns.
- (e) The Sacraments.
- (f) Bible and Miracles.
- (g) Ritual.
- (h) Discipline, Fasting, Penance.
- (i) Church Organisation.

Positivism is based on Comte's very striking analysis and teaching that the Catholic Church in design, in ideal, in moral and social aim during its best time, from Augustine to St. Louis—say from the middle of the fourth century to the middle of the thirteenth, or from Gregory IX to St. Bernard, from the middle of the

eleventh to the middle of the twelfth century—was far the most lofty and efficient religious institution that has ever appeared in the course of human evolution. It developed many of the noblest characters and the most profound geniuses recorded in the annals of mankind. Its crude, arbitrary, and fantastic doctrine, however valuable, perhaps indispensable to carry on its moral and social mission, was so rotten and suicidal from the point of view of scientific logic and rational philosophy that it was continually destroying and neutralising its magnificent social and moral task and the splendid brains and natures which it enlisted in its service.

The discipline, scheme, and moral and social institutions of Catholicism at its best were so far perfect that they may be ultimately restored, and might be restored on a Positivist basis at once. All the vices, the evils, the incoherences and blindness cast in the teeth of the Catholic Church are to be attributed to its fanciful and wholly unreal doctrine, whilst all that it did of good in past history, and all that it may yet do of good in the future, may be set down to its discipline, its ritual, its organisation, and its great moral and social institutions, many of which in themselves are wise and noble, though perverted and paralysed by an effete and incoherent creed. Positivism is Catholicism *plus* science—*i.e.*, a spiritual regeneration based on the creed of science.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

IN a former essay it was maintained that the Catholic Church in its best ages was, in design, in ideal, in moral and social aim, the highest and most efficient religious institution that had ever appeared in the course of human evolution. It produced men of the noblest character and the most profound genius recorded in the annals of mankind; but the arbitrary, fictitious, and ignorant creed on which it was founded was continually neutralising its high moral and social efforts, and hampered the splendid brains and natures which it enlisted in its service. In scheme and in the highest type some of the moral and social institutions of Catholicism were so admirable that they may retain permanent value and life when adapted to a scientific creed. Its discipline, ritual, and organisation, though long paralysed by an effete and incoherent creed, may serve a scientific creed as examples and types for the civilisation of the future.

We need not discuss the doctrine from an intellectual point of view. Positivists cannot accept any religious scheme, however plausible or beautiful or consolatory it may look, that is founded on gratuitous assumptions, dreams, Utopias—wholly incapable of proof. We will not trust to figments merely because they are graceful,

sympathetic figments, for they must end in collapse and disgust when found out.

The central Catholic institution is the Mass. "The most admirable of the Catholic institutions, the Mass, which condensed in one mystical rite the doctrine, the discipline, and the worship of the religion," says Comte. He adds, "It was so shocking to common sense that it was always repulsive to over speculative minds, whilst it awoke distressing doubts even in the best hearts."

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The material incorporation of Christ with Humanity and the spiritual incorporation of the worshipper with Christ was the central idea of Christianity, and it was unquestionably the central spring of its moral power as a religion.

All the purifying and ennobling force of the Christian ideal centred in this communion of the Human and

the Divine. Comte very truly treats it as the transcendental and mystical preparation for the religion of Humanity—*i.e.*, the incorporation of each individual with an idealised and yet real Humanity. The divinity of Jesus, his equal godhead with the Father, his sacrifice of himself and the reconciliation of God with Man, as it was presented in the Pauline Epistles, was the centre and essence of the Christian faith.

Now the drama of the Mass repeated this sacrifice of Christ daily and hourly in the sight of the worshippers. It made this sacrifice *visible, tangible*, realisable by the senses. Protestants cannot understand how the mere sight of a rite can be an act of worship. The Mass to the Catholic is a sacred drama, where a divine incorporation is enacted before his eyes. And, like Baptism, Marriage or Coronation, has indelible religious efficacy.

The Mass effected three purposes:—

- (1) It enabled the believing worshipper to recognise the sacrifice of Christ with intense realism.
- (2) It gave the worshipper the consciousness of being a participant in a mystical and superhuman (*i.e.*, a divine) world.
- (3) It placed the Priest above him in a sacred and mysterious order.

Hence the fury of the Reformation battle raged round the Mass, as was indeed quite natural. The Mass was the essence of the sacerdotal theory. The Mass implied a priest, who only could invoke Christ's presence; and a priest implied a spiritual authority. Now the demo-

cratic spirit of Protestantism, which by prayer puts each worshipper individually in communion with God, rejects all forms of real spiritual authority. Hence arose against the Reformation the eagerness of the Catholic Priesthood to defend the Mass, which meant the maintenance of a real priesthood. And in our own day we see the eagerness of the High Anglican Priesthood to introduce the germs and symbols of the Mass, by which they mean their desire to be recognised as a real Priesthood rather than officials of a State Establishment. It never was pretended that any layman could work the miracle of the Mass.

Now, religions are either sacerdotal or non-sacerdotal. Sacerdotal religions are fully and systematically organised, having a settled ritual, an authoritative moral discipline, and a formal written doctrine, all of which are maintained and worked by an official hierarchy which rules without appeal. Non-sacerdotal religions tend to a loose and fluid organisation, with little ritual of a settled kind, no essential forms or formulas, individual freedom from spiritual control, and usually a flexible and inconsistent doctrine or creed. In the Catholic system the essential points are what the worshippers see, or hear, or do in church. In the Protestant scheme the point of importance is what each individual worshipper utters in words or subjectively feels, whether in church or the closet. Taking the Catholic as the type of a Sacerdotal Church, and the Quaker Society as the extreme form of a non-sacerdotal community, the Church of

England stands halfway between the two. It rejects the Mass, the Confessional, a symbolical ritual (except for some quaint survivals), and, above all, a celibate Priesthood, whilst it retains Episcopacy, a reformed ritual, and dogmatic creeds with an ecclesiastical judicature.

(1) The Mass, then, was the keystone of the Catholic scheme and the basis of priestly authority. No doubt the whole idea of personal sacrifice and atonement for offences is a survival from barbarous religions. Human sacrifices to reconcile the divine powers after human sins run through all ancient religions. It was familiar to us in the mythology of Greece and Rome, of the Jews, the Egyptians, the Hindoos, and we find it extant still in savage Africa. It was a natural—almost an inevitable—idea to be developed by the Hebrew authors of the Gospel. And thence it was transmitted to the Catholic founders, and has been grossly exaggerated by Calvinistic Protestantism, in which familiar use has deadened the sense of disgust in the canting phrases about “the washing” and “sprinkling” by the blood of Christ.

Sacrifice certainly is at the base of all religions, and the Religion of Humanity enlarges its scope and elevates its nature. The idea of sacrifice as essential to religion has passed through a thousand forms. It has only to be purified and made real. The divinity, the incarnation, the atonement of Christ, and the Trinity all hang together and form an object of worship. And

thus the Mass mystically concentrates the whole religion. And the doctrine of Transubstantiation is essential to the Mass. Extravagant as it is, it is not more fanciful than the Virgin Mother of God, or the Descent into Hell and Resurrection and Ascension. It is not seemly for Protestants to scoff at any miraculous event. The Church of England, in its Articles, Catechism, and Service, resorts to a truly double-tongued ambiguity, whilst the Westminster Confession of Presbyterians frankly declares the elements to be "really and truly" bread and wine, and reduces the great daily miracle to a periodic commemoration of Christ's death.

(2) The second effect of the Mass was to concentrate the ritual on the central drama, and hence to take part by one's presence in the miracle is to the Catholic the essential duty. In the same way Peers and Commons are supposed to take part in a Coronation simply by witnessing it. The Mass is a *visible* act of worship, which to Protestants is an empty form. All ancient religions had *visible* acts and *outward* observances by prostration, procession, and the like, some of which, as in litanies, in baptism, in burial, in consecrations, and coronations are retained by Protestants. On the other hand, Presbyterians tend towards a merely subjective spiritualism, insisting on inward feelings and suppressing all outward manifestations. The English Church, in ritual as in creed, resorts to unmeaning compromise, allowing candles which may not be lit, altars of wood but not of stone, a hierarchy which has but shadowy

power, and the form of consecration, whilst in words denying any superhuman efficacy in its acts.

(3). Lastly, the Mass concentrates and gives its stamp to the *discipline* of the Catholic Church. To have any actual partaking of the Eucharist involved confession and absolution, and this in practice tended to moral purification. Confession indeed, and, as an indispensable consequence, Absolution from sin, is an essential part of the Eucharist in every Christian Church. And though the Establishment rejects the confessional on system, it retains in literary form both confession and absolution of the actual congregation in its beautiful service.

This is illustrated by the obstinate claim of Churchmen—lay or ordained—to debar from the Eucharist those whose second marriage it condemns.

Thus the Mass condenses in one mystical rite the doctrine, the discipline, and the worship of the Church. By a daily miracle it teaches, controls, and unites all present at the rite. It does not separate communicants from congregation, whereas the Lord's Supper of Protestants tends to make a first and a second class of Christians. The Anglican Church is in a hopeless dilemma. In words it faintly sanctions the idea of Transubstantiation and material sacrifice of Christ. It begins a "Communion" service which breaks off to let the majority go away, whilst it gives bread and wine to the few who "stay." Nine-tenths of nominal Churchmen never even see the Eucharist, and know nothing of it.

Thereupon the new school seek to introduce the Mass by various equivocal devices, and the impotence of the Bishops enables them to go some way in converting our Communion Service into a Mass.

But it is impossible to have the Mass without Priests, and there cannot be real Priests in a Protestant communion having open Bible, private judgment, personal sanctification by prayer, and a society for three centuries deeply alien to the idea of Priest and abhorrent of Priestcraft. The Anglican Communion Service is a magnificent bit of literature, but it is an unintelligible compromise, a pathetic piece of poetry and devotional inspiration, because it uses words which it does not convert into acts, and undoes in the next sentence what it announces in the first. The Mass is a reality—if we admit its scientific extravagance—and for religious and moral efficacy the most potent institution that any religion in man's history can boast—"the most admirable of the Catholic institutions"—at once a tremendous drama, a searching discipline, an entire creed transfigured in a visible presentment of a spiritual doctrine.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SACRAMENTS.—The general idea of Sacrament is a religious consecration of the person to some social function or communion. Both name and idea are derived from the Roman oath of the soldier to be true to his standard. Both Catholic and Protestant Churches have adopted the institution as cardinal elements of their organisation. But both have adopted it in a confused and irregular way. Positivism has enlarged the institution of sacraments and makes it systematic.

As is well known, Protestants accept only two sacraments—"Baptism" and the "Lord's Supper"—as being instituted by Christ—*i.e.*, the only forms used by early Christians before the Catholic Church was organised in the Middle Ages. But these two sacraments are not homologous, have no common principle, except the outward form, and both together are quite inadequate as a social discipline. Baptism is the normal type of a sacrament. It is the consecration of the individual to be a member of the Church. It cannot be repeated, and it marks the entrance of the person baptised into a new social life. But if the baptism of infants be accepted (as it certainly should be by sponsors), Confirmation—the personal acceptance of that obligation by the intelli-

gent youth—should also be a sacrament. The Lord's Supper is a rite, an act of worship, like adoration, prayer, or genuflexion, continually repeated and marking no epoch of life. It is not a consecration to any special function or communion. Both Catholic and Protestant Churches misunderstand the religious meaning of a sacrament, when they make the Eucharist a sacrament. When the English Catechism admits only two cases of the "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," it narrows the efficacy of the institution. Confirmation, Orders, Matrimony, have just claims to be so treated.

Even the Catholic Church has not adequately utilised the great institution of the sacrament. It knows really but five, for the Mass and Penance are constantly renewed acts of worship, or discipline, and are not formal consecration to a new life or function. The true Catholic sacraments are these: Baptism, Confirmation, Orders, Matrimony, Extreme Unction. They mark, once for all, the believer's acceptance of a new social and religious duty or character.

Positivism, I say, greatly enlarges and ennobles this grand institution of a sacrament. It accepts nine sacraments—each being the serial and final consecration of the person to a new state of life having a social character.

*Presentation* (equivalent to Baptism) is the dedication of the child by parents and sponsors to Humanity.

*Initiation* (equivalent to Confirmation) is the conscious

acceptance of that dedication by the trained adolescent on entrance into scientific education.

*Admission* (on coming of age) is the consecration to public duty of the adult at the close of systematic training.

*Destination* is the consecration of the fully-grown man to a public profession.

*Marriage* is the consecration of man and woman to each other and to the new family they form.

*Maturity, Retirement, Transformation*, consecrate the full career of the man, his withdrawal from active life, the passing into subjective immortality at death.

*Incorporation* (seven years after death) is the consecration of the life of the deceased to union with living Humanity.

All of these sacraments are the religious stamp placed on successive stages in the human career. They are the public and religious dedication of each phase of individual life to the Providence that unites and rules us all. It is by these that the religion of Humanity builds up the religious life of all to social uses.

Sacraments, in truth, are the best institution of Christendom; but they need systematic development. We find them in the earliest practices of savage Fetichism, especially in initiation into the society of the braves, consecration of chiefs and medicine-men and the like. Baptism and the Eucharist are mere adaptations of the Jewish Circumcision and Passover. The Egyptian

Service of the Dead was one of the grandest of all sacraments. The Middle Ages made Academic Degrees, Knighthood, Coronation, quasi-sacraments, which, in the forms of Admission and Destination, Positivism offers to all. No real and organised religion can dispense with sacraments. And sacraments are impossible without a Priesthood of some kind. Every organised system of religion has found moral and social efficacy in this eternal institution of collective humanity.

The Positivist sacraments are a great development of the Catholic—far more systematic, more rational, more practical, more sympathetic and more human. Nine epochs of normal life are not too many to mark the transitions from infancy to death. These correspond with the sacraments of the Churches and also with the social habits of laymen. Infant baptism is common to us, as to all the Episcopal churches; and some analogous ceremony was customary in all ages and under all creeds. Confirmation is really a more important and indispensable sacrament than Baptism, and is rightly accepted as such by Catholics. Our *Admission* answers to the lay coming of age, which is now observed only by the rich as a frivolous or pretentious festival. *Destination* is now reserved for Priests and Sovereigns, but it is properly essential for all forms of public, social, and industrial life. *Marriage* should be a sacrament if anything be, for it marks one of the most momentous of all epochs of life. And in the Positivist Church it will be a sacrament that cannot be repeated. *Maturity, Retire-*

*ment*, *Transformation*, and *Incorporation* are all new sacraments added by Comte, except that *Transformation* has analogies with our Anglican Service for the Sick, and also with Extreme Unction. *Incorporation* corresponds partly to the Christian Service of Burial and partly to Catholic Canonisation.

CONFESSION.—Confession, in some form, is the proper and indispensable adjunct to sacrament, indeed, to any real spiritual authority or discipline. No effective Priesthood is possible without personal, *i.e.*, auricular confession. Catholic confession is usually overcharged, unreal, burdened with clerical forms and rules; but in its best forms, is efficient. The fault is that its principal action is with the young and with women who have little but peccadilloes to confess, and these are often artificial. The secret, unofficial confession of high Anglicans has every evil. There are no proper safeguards or control, no limits of age, no special authority, no publicity in the vestry-room—where a young, unmarried, but marriageable enthusiast hears the confessions of girls in secret. The Catholic Church puts the Confessional under very careful regulations, and yet it is abused as a system. Rational religion would only admit Confession when it was not surreptitious, occasional, and made to an authorised, married elder of wide knowledge of the world.

CELIBATE PRIESTHOOD.—This may have been valuable—perhaps indispensable—in past ages, but it is disastrous that it was perpetuated. Had it been surren-

dered in time, Catholicism might have avoided being burdened with a clerical professionalism—having its main energies exhausted in maintaining itself. Marriage should be normally open to any spiritual and intellectual order, without being compulsory, as it is in the Orthodox or Greek Church. Its consequences, as tending to a clerical caste and to incorporation with the rich and industrial orders, must be averted by making any priesthood free from the cares of wealth and social display, and making it a really spiritual body of simple men incorporated with the labouring masses, as is now the cases in some lands.

MONACHISM.—This noble institution of Catholicism was historically indispensable during the stormy ages of brutality and confusion. It was necessary to the foundation of a spiritual order. Comte calls it “the cradle of all the chief Christian conceptions, both dogmatic and practical.” But the use and the social efficacy of monasteries was exhausted early in the thirteenth century. Since then, the institution has been degenerating into corruption, or mere waste, often into anti-social fanaticism. In spite of some rare contributions to science and to learning, and allowing for many noble efforts of charity and some pathetic and beautiful spirits, especially amongst women, we are forced to-day to regard Monasticism, even purged as it is of most of its ancient vices, as being in our age mere waste of human life, a perversion of noble social energies, intellectually and spiritually, a bottomless pit of vacuity and superstition.

The secret, unauthorised, unregulated and anarchical monasticism of Anglican Protestants is a dangerous and unnatural affectation, from which no social or moral good can come. These surreptitious Protestant cloisters and imitation nunneries tend often to treat cruelty and inhumanity as the sight most pleasant to God. One has heard of some of these female prison-houses tending to become a sort of Do-the-Girls' Hall, where hard work, poor food, with hypocritical fasting and vigils, are forced upon wretched children in the name of the Saviour of mankind and his Mother. We need not reject the principle of occasional temporary Retreats for men as for women—true spiritual “rest-cures,” if kept free from vows, public or private, apart from all professional asceticism, and strictly within control by a wise, authorised supervision.

FASTING, and other forms of abnegation, no doubt historically performed an indispensable service in checking the brutal self-indulgence of the ancient world. In their origin and in general purpose, such penances were rude but efficient engines of moral purification. But the practice has long since degenerated into a disgusting hypocrisy. Catholics—even men of eminence and authority—may rigidly abstain from meat on Fridays and in Lent, whilst filling themselves with spiced dishes and abundant wines. Fasting to the point of causing pain, weakness, and even bad health, as a thing pleasant to God, has long been a source of mere mischief. The idea of habitual control of every bodily appetite and

carnal lust must be made a permanent and powerful instrument of moral improvement when it has been made quite general, rational, scientific, and human. Auguste Comte rigidly pursued a diet and a life of extreme abstinence on religious and ethical grounds. He laid down no general rules whilst insisting on personal control of all natural desires. But the morality of the future can deduce from Catholic Penance and Fasting little more than the bare idea of a systematic discipline of appetite as a religious, and even social duty.

PENANCE—or Discipline—as exerted historically in the best ages of the Catholic Church was (at least in purpose) one of the noblest institutions of the Middle Ages. We recall Ambrose confronting Theodosius the Great after the massacre at Thessalonica; Alexander III supporting Becket against Henry II; Innocent III dealing with John and Philip Augustus; the entire careers of St. Gregory, St. Bruno, St. Benedict, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Francis, Hugh Grossetête, Stephen Langton—all these exhibit the grandest and most sustained effort ever made in the history of civilisation to restrain the passions, the cruelty, the selfishness, ambition, greed, lust, of men in high state—and that by relying solely on moral agency and by appealing to the conscience of the great as well as to the social influence of the people. Not that we can justify the mode of this appeal. We acknowledge the harshness, even the inhumanity, arrogance, professional insolence, and fanaticism which too often stained even the best of these



efforts. That was the curse of Catholicism and of its extravagant, visionary, arbitrary, anti-social creed. But they gave us many a grand example of moral courage.

Even now the power of the Catholic discipline is not wholly spent. We see it still active in Ireland, in some of the more primitive and less revolutionised countries of Europe, and amidst the ruder Catholic masses scattered over the world. If we put aside its arbitrary, professional, and inhuman character (the priest pretending to chastise in the name of an Almighty Being), the traditions of the Catholic Church have left for the future organisation of morality a noble lesson of what may be effected towards the systematic discipline of human passion.

RITUAL.—It is not easy for English people, saturated with Protestant traditions and the revolt against ecclesiasticism, to grasp the part played by Ritual in other systems of religion. If Christianity be reduced to the Sermon on the Mount—and that must be taken to be the essence of Christ's Gospel—any Ritual must be a vain form. The only true Christians would be primitive Gospellers and the early Quakers. They were consistent followers of Jesus who said that each soul stands in direct contact with the Almighty—needs no ritual, no words, no priest, no congregation, no church, no sacrament, no rite, no temple, no altar, no art, no grace—indeed, worships best in silent meditation. So do an Indian Yoghi, a Mussulman Imam, Buddhist hermit. That is Monotheism in its purity and essence,

But no Christian sect has been able to maintain the consistent unadulterated milk of the original Gospel—not even the Quakers. To the Egyptian, Indian, Greek, or Roman Polytheists it was natural to worship their much more earthly and human gods by grand ceremonies, visible and dramatic acts of external adoration. The Catholic Church, succeeding to Eastern and Western Polytheism, gradually created a very elaborate and beautiful ritual—which, as the Reformers very truly said, was directly contrary to the Gospel of Jesus. Visible and dramatic acts of outward adoration may be maintained for their own beauty and the pleasure and social exaltation they confer, even when belief in the Supernatural Powers has waned. On the other hand, in a religion which has reduced ritual to a minimum in reliance on a purely subjective worship of the individual soul, the decay of belief in the Divine leaves a mere void. This is the reason why, in a society where belief in the Supernatural and in Revelation is rapidly dying down, visible and dramatic ritual holds the field by its own artistic and social stimulus, whilst the spiritual communion of the individual soul languishes. So to-day, whilst theological creeds and Bible inspiration are rapidly losing hold, Ritualism is growing in the older Churches, whilst the more arid types of Evangelicalism are sinking. I have witnessed in my own life a striking growth in Ritualism along with an equal decay of Puritanism, which is disappearing slowly and imperceptibly like night before the sun. External dramatic

worship, visible acts of reverence, are everywhere becoming popular. There is more ritual in a Presbyterian chapel to-day than sixty years ago could be found in a high Anglican church; and there is more ritual in many an Anglican church than sixty or seventy years ago could be seen in a Catholic cathedral in England.

The modern Catholic ritual has combined much of tedious and puerile formalism, with a superfluity of genuflexions and wearisome reiteration of benedictions. But take it as a whole in its best form, it is a highly artistic and impressive form of cult—not equal to the mighty processions of the Egyptian theocracy, not so beautiful as a Panathenaic Festival at Athens, not so imposing as once was a ceremony in Hagia Sophia at Constantinople, but superior to any other form of worship in Western Christendom. By its elasticity, its immense range and variety, its artistic opportunities and the concentration of every instrument of beauty, it may seem to us as a type of what rational worship (*i.e.*, public profession of respect) to Humanity may become.

ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH.—All competent and independent minds have long agreed that, given its creed, its end, and its conditions, the Catholic Church is a miracle of sagacity. The proof lies in its adaptability to all ages during fifteen centuries, to all climates, races, and temperaments, the rapidity of its development in North, Central, and South America, in India, in Syria, in Ireland, in Poland. One might hold that no organisation of any Church can be good in itself. But no one

can assert that the Catholic organisation does not fulfil its own end. That it does so little real and permanent good comparatively for such gigantic resources and efforts is the fault of its arbitrary, fictitious, and un-social creed.

The great characteristic of Catholic organisation is personal responsibility, thorough graduation of hierarchical authority, absence of any local or temporal (lay) control, and absolute direction of all government from above downwards. The Catholic Church is organised like the German army. Election, except in the case of the Popedom, is unknown. The nomination to function of inferior by the superior is the normal rule. Positivists and Catholics are the only religious bodies which do not base Church government on election or lay control.

This is not the only point of contact. Not only do the social and moral institutions of Catholicism attract and inspire the Positivist, but they offer him an outline for the permanent organisation of a spiritual power—and this is the burning problem of our age. Doctor Congreve not only was the author of the maxim—Positivism is Catholicism *plus* Science, but he invented the even more admirable term—Human Catholicism. I once heard a well-known editor tell a Catholic Prelate that if the Pope would turn Positivist he would rule the entire world. This impertinent jest contained a subtle truth. The religion of Humanity may take lessons from the Church, may incorporate, purify, and develop some of its institutions—but it can copy nothing, adopt nothing un-

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modified, and must purge out all its extravagance and vice. Above all, it must entirely discard its creed, using it only by way of analogy and symbol. The first thing for us is to secure a scientific, real, demonstrable *Creed*—without which all the social and moral efforts in the world will end in ruin, inhumanity, and strife.

No. Catholics may come to us. We cannot go to Catholics.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ANGLICAN ESTABLISHMENT

IN passing from the Catholic Church to the Anglican, we are taking a leap from a Church which, at least in spirit and in name, claims to be ecumenical, humanitarian, and permanent, to a Church which does not pretend to be anything but national (*i.e.*, local), a creation of the secular State, and consequently a transition, a compromise, a temporary stop-gap in the evolution of religion.

The entire process of theological evolution throughout the history of mankind has been a shrinkage, or gradual restriction, of the field of Theology. Polytheism was a shrinkage from Fetichism which was ready to see supernatural and superhuman powers in anything and everything, animal or material. Monotheism was a decisive shrinkage from Polytheism, for it substituted a single Divine power for an infinite variety of Gods, Goddesses, and supermen and superwomen. Catholicism, it is true, combined Monotheism with a considerable mixture of superhuman persons; but Protestantism, in all its forms, was a revolt from this semi-Polytheistic religion. Protestantism was a violent shrinkage from Catholicism, in that it reduced the divine and celestial beings at most to three, and logically to one; whilst it narrowed miracles down to a few antique types, purged off masses of ritual practices, and limited the Priesthood to very modest, and

almost lay, offices and privileges. In all its hundred forms it was a decadent, and strictly limited, form of Catholic orthodoxy. We shall see hereafter how Evangelical dissent carried this boiling down of Catholicism to an infinitesimal residuum.

Monotheism was a kind of *compromise* with Polytheism. It dismissed the deities of the Nile, Olympus, and the Capitol, and concentrated the adoration of nations on a supreme Unity or metaphysical Trinity. But, when Catholicism was gradually organised into a Church and was crystallised with a dogmatic Creed, an imitative and æsthetic Ritual, an hierarchic Priesthood, there was little trace of compromise left. And for some fifteen centuries it has lived and worked as an organic Church.

All forms of orthodox Protestantism, of course, are forms of compromise. They retain the three Creeds, the Bible, a priesthood or ministry, if it be only the lay speaker of the hour. They mostly retain as doctrines the Trinity, the Atonement, Salvation, a Last Judgment, Future Life—Heaven and Hell in some kind. They retain, as religious practices, congregational worship, psalmody, preaching, Baptism, Eucharist, Wedlock, Burial—the Word of God, the miracles recorded in it, and the miraculous influence of the Persons of the Trinity.

The Church of England is the most complex and ambiguous kind of compromise in all Christendom. It is a compromise within a compromise. It is at once Local-Catholic, Spiritual-Temporal, Sacer-

dotal-Individual, Sacramental-Evangelical, Ecclesiastical-Biblical. It combines every kind of contradictory. It is intensely English—limited even to one section of the British Islands, and intensely repudiated by three out of four nations grouped into the United Kingdom. It is not even British, but purely English, embracing only a minority of one of our four nations; it is as singular an English anomaly as our ancient Constitution and Parliament.

In things practical and political, compromise has invaluable uses and indispensable services to confer. Compromise is the soul of politics. But compromise is not so admirable in things spiritual as it may be in things temporal. Still, even in religion, compromise may have many practical uses. This ingenious and inveterate spirit of compromise has been at once the strength and the weakness of the Church of England. It is the least dogmatic, the least hide-bound, and therefore the most comprehensive of the Christian Communions. Both in creed and in ritual it is "all things to all men." This is its good side and its bad side. It includes in its pale all Englishmen who, formally or informally, choose to count themselves in it. It includes, even in its Priesthood, men who are at opposed poles of thought, and so avow their belief—men who differ as widely as the Cowley Fathers differ from the "Broad Churchmen" of Oxford and Cambridge. It admits those who are pure (or rather, real) Romanists and also those who hardly believe more than the first of the Thirty-nine Articles. This is its



vast toleration, its unlimited comprehensiveness. A sceptical peer was fond of quoting the epigram of a cynical politician—that it was the one thing which protected us from “The Gospel.” Comte describes it as the “Anglican hypocrisy.”

The Anglican Church, with its offshoots in Ireland, Scotland, and America (almost alone of Protestant variations), retains Episcopacy, but leaves its Bishops with little real authority. It has Priests who are often as truly lay as any squire or professional man. It reduces the Sacraments to two, but repudiates the miraculous efficacy of sacraments. It professes Confession and Absolution, but tolerates no systematic confessional or personal absolution. It accepts Transubstantiation verbally, and then adds words in denial of it; and in practice allows any clergyman to act as he pleases. It has a fixed Creed in words, which it leaves clergy and laity to interpret as each chooses; and no one has authority to interpret it formally. It has an official Ritual, which one clergyman can in practice bring as close to Rome as imitation can go, and another can bring as near to a Presbyterian congregation as he likes.

The Church of England is, indeed, all things to all men—Catholic to the Ritualist, Evangelical to the Biblist, Hierarchical in name and form, in external pretension, with a lay sovereign as its Head, but anarchical or individualist in reality. It professes a belief in “the Holy Catholic Church”; but, officially and really, it includes only a minority of the people of one of the four

British nations. A priest's rectorship is a freehold from which the owner can usually defy his bishop. Thus it is a Church which hardly pretends to exercise discipline, though it retains ecclesiastical tribunals which occasionally try very extreme and flagrant cases of morals or doctrine. It cannot, in fact, act as a Church either in taking an independent attitude in dealing with the governing class in the State or the squire in the parish. It talks about its own Apostolical succession, its Divine institution, and its Holy Catholic tradition; whilst in history it was the creation of an avaricious tyrant and his corrupt favourites. Its prelates are appointed by a lay minister, who may be an Agnostic or a Jew. Its law, and even its ritual, is the creature of Parliament; and in practice it is the spiritual phase of the rich and the powerful orders of society.

I would say nothing of the kind as to individual churchmen, lay, clergy, or prelates—very many of whom are quite exemplary and even saintly followers of Christ. We all know that, even in its worst ages, even in the days of the Restoration, of Queen Anne and the early Georges, the Church bred men of eminent piety, goodness, and moral elevation. If it had scandalous and evil churchmen, so had Catholic and other Protestant communities. We are not dealing with exceptions or, indeed, any individual cases, good or bad. My business in these essays is to estimate the moral and social effect on society of Churches as organised and worked.

It is far from my purpose to frame an indictment

against any Church. The Anglican Church is an extremely compound and complex institution—intensely English, having much good and bad inextricably mixed together. No man can understand it, or be fair to it, and do it justice who has not seen it from inside, and who does not look at it from the light of English history. For myself, I was brought up as a member of the Church of England; legally speaking, I am a member of it now, for I can claim all the legal rights of a churchman, and I join in its services on due occasion with a certain sympathy and patience. Everyone who has been baptised, confirmed, taken the sacraments, signed the Thirty-nine Articles, and has not been officially removed from membership is a lay member of the Church. There is no legal power to inquire into the personal opinions of a layman, and it is the last thing any reasonable Church authority would try to do. This is one of the anomalies, one of the privileges and boasts of the Church, that it tolerates private judgment in its most extreme form.

To be fair, let us take first the weak side and then the strong side of the Anglican Church:

(1) Its underlying weakness is that it is not a free, independent spiritual power.

(2) Its strength and power is that it is comprehensive, tolerant, cultivated, and a bulwark against sectarian bigotry.

I.—The Church is not an independent spiritual Power. Of all the Protestant variations, it is far the least independent. Baptists, Wesleyans, Quakers

manage their spiritual things without the interference of Government, without Parliament, without any outside authority. So do Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, Theists, Positivists. None of these communities are creatures of the State, nor are their affairs ordered by lay politicians. The Establishment was created and is governed by lay bodies, of whom often only a minority are even Churchmen. In our own memory Parliament has disestablished and disendowed one branch of the Church, and is attempting to do the same to another branch. In recent years the order of divine service has been regulated by Parliament. And the Ministers who control Parliament are often Dissenters, Catholics, or Agnostics.

Many so-called "livings" are the property of the landed aristocracy, so that many a sporting peer is the "patron" of a dozen "cure of souls." A priest supported by his "patron," or by his congregation, need not fear interference from a Bishop. The country parson, too, is often a country gentleman with intermittent clerical garb and function. It is thus the most entirely secular Church in Christendom. The Orthodox Greek and Russian Church is more completely the creature of the State; but it is not so entirely identified in interest, habits, and origin with the richer and landlord class.

We saw that the central spirit and the transcendent honour of Catholic Christianity was to have created an independent spiritual force, which could confront, modify, restrain and moralise the temporal force. That is the real secret of Christianity. Of all forms of Western

Christianity, the establishment has gone the furthest in surrendering that claim. Its origin from the passions of a tyrant, its constitution by a series of Acts of the Legislature, its readiness during nearly four centuries to accept from Parliament even changes in its ritual, the nomination to all its offices by laymen, its preposterous wealth, its intimate association with the life, habits, opinions and prejudices of the richer classes—make it a bureau of the State, a moral police in the interest of the rich and powerful.

We never hear a protest, hardly a doubt, coming from the Church officially, rarely even from any eminent person in the hierarchy, against any form of national aggrandisement, any public crime or policy, however immoral, unless it touch the wealth or privileges of the Church. Prelates and priests bless any war, any aggression, any tyranny which the governing orders choose to start; they send their sons to join in buccaneering adventures in Africa and in Asia, they are always ready to chant *Te Deums* over national aggression, and to sneer at the "Nonconformist conscience" which seeks to make the voice of morality and justice heard. We seldom find the Church, or any eminent body of churchmen, take the lead in seeking to prevent a war, to abolish cruel sports, to put an end to social wars, to assuage the violence of strikes and lock-outs, to check the greed of capital and the anarchy of its victims. Quakers, Wesleyans, Baptists, Unitarians, and Positivists may try their best to do these things. The Church, as a body and

officially, and apart from a few isolated persons, sticks to its masters—the governing majority, and to its “patrons”—the rich owners of its livings. There is not, and there never was in Christendom, a communion which was socially, morally, and politically so closely identified with the governing orders of the State.

II.—But, to be fair, we should turn to that which is the strength and power of the Church of England—its wide comprehensiveness, its tolerance. Of all Protestant communities, it is the most tolerant, the most elastic, the most large-minded. If it has many of the evils of a State Church, controlled by governments and established by Acts of the legislature, it has many of the advantages of a State Church. In theory it admits all citizens, without any tests as to their beliefs, or their acts, or even as to their formal enrolment, baptism, or any other rite. There is no legal method of testing the *status* or the opinion of any layman. Prelates eagerly crave the power of interring a Darwin, a Huxley, a Browning—or those who were notorious Agnostics and never entered a Church. A famous rector chided his clerical brethren for being troubled about “Theology,” and he who was nicknamed as one of the “*Septem contra Christum*” became Archbishop of Canterbury.

This elasticity both of doctrine and of practice is eminently useful—perhaps meritorious—in a transitional system, based on a compromise and aiming only at softening the rigours of a religious revolution. But it is a rotten foundation for a Church claiming to be Catholic,

Christian, everlasting. It is only Agnosticism, veiled in evangelical sentimentalism and hypocritical respectability.

The consequences of this elasticity both in creed and in practice are far-reaching. A large and increasing body of anti-orthodox thought is growing up within the Church. Many eminent churchmen can only be called Christians by the process which includes Carlyle and George Eliot as within that pale. Dogma is almost an open question in the Church, and this gives scope, even within its own clergy, to a very large amount of progressive thought and scientific enlightenment. The Oxford Essayists of 1860 were acquitted after trial, and even promoted; and the only legal sentence of exclusion in our time was pronounced on one who in the pulpit preached dogmatic Theism as a new religion.

Dogma is an open question in the Church because the Church doctrine, in its Thirty-nine Articles, in its formularies, and other parliamentary charters, is almost designedly neutral or double-tongued, and it designedly omits any practical machinery for interpreting its neutral and double-tongued Articles and formularies. Its Articles of belief are Calvinist, its ritual is Catholic, its organisation is Erastian. The Calvinistic Articles generally say "Yes" and "No" on the same matter; its Catholic ritual stops short of the miracle of the Mass and of priestly absolution; and its Erastian State organisation is a toy model of the Catholic Church—a model that is intended to be looked at, but not to work.

It has a dummy Pope and Episcopal Conclave, a dummy House of Convocation, a dummy Mass, and a dummy Penance and Absolution. None of these will work; nor are they made to work. The men in power, the rich and influential orders, do not want a really free Church, and they will not tolerate an independent and real Priesthood.

A result of this great elasticity of dogma and of organisation is very important and most honourable. The Church of England is far the most cultured, the most sociable, perhaps the most learned and enlightened religious community in the world. There is nothing in the Church system to check any man, lay or clerical, even any prelate, from being a great scholar, or man of science, or historian, or writer in poetry or prose, and a leader in purely human studies. And we know that English literature, philosophy and science have been largely advanced by such men.

The Church is more truly cultured than all the rest of the Christian denominations put together, even if we give due weight to the learning of German, Swiss, and Dutch theologians. On the whole, there has never been in any Christian Church such an array of culture during four centuries since the days of Latimer, Cranmer, Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, with the philosophy of Berkeley and Butler, the wit of Swift and Sterne and Sydney Smith, the poetry of Herbert, Ken, and Keble, the learning of Bentley, Whewell, Milman, and Thirlwall.

The great achievement of the Church is the English



Bible. The Bible is the greatest linguistic triumph in the history of literature, or comparable only to the *Iliad*. For exactly three centuries it has kept our English language, over the English-speaking peoples, pure, permanent, noble. The Church had the good fortune to be founded at the crisis of the development of our English tongue, and thus to be associated with the perfection of the English language.

Almost on a par with the Bible is the Liturgy of the Church—in literary beauty even grander, because it is of an earlier date and much of it is original even in thought. The Liturgy was formed in an age of even nobler prose than the reign of James I, and contains some of the most splendid passages in our literature. Those who are not familiar with it have a great loss. The Collects, the Litany, the Communion and Burial Services are amongst the grandest compositions in our language. The Confessions and Absolutions, in their way, are sublime. And the Burial Service is a magnificent drama. To my mind all these are far superior to the Missal and Roman rituals from which they were adapted.

Viewed as a drama, a spectacle, or as an oratorio, with adequate music and choir, the English Church ritual is more majestic than the Catholic or any other Christian form of worship. Perhaps this appeals rather to those of severe taste and trained culture. To the poor and ignorant it may seem wanting in the colour, movement, and pomp of the best Catholic or Greek ceremonials,

But it is surely vastly superior in beauty and pathos to any other Protestant worship. Music and artistic song are a central and indispensable part of worship. And music and a trained choir imply a fixed and written liturgy.

This breadth, culture, and freedom of the Church is largely connected with its close identification with the wealthy and governing classes. In the country the clergy are hardly anything but an appendage of the squirearchy, cut off by interest, sympathy, origin, and habits from the working-classes, whether farmers or labourers, and often living quite secular lives, subject to performing stated services. In towns it is different, and even with the present generation great changes have taken place, and the aristocratic tone of the Establishment has been rapidly disappearing. But all through the nineteenth century the country clergy were more or less "upper-class" men, however poor and devout. From the era of Pusey, Newman, Maurice, and Robertson an immense change has taken place in town churches, tending on one side to Romanism, on the other to Gospel simplicity. But those who knew at home the French *curé* or the Irish "father," the Swiss *pasteur* or the Free Kirk minister, know how widely they differed from the jolly country gentleman who on Sundays donned his clerical garb and called himself a parish priest. Down to the middle of the nineteenth century, at any rate, they were often milord's chaplains, what Sydney Smith called "squarsons," pleasant, cultivated, or popular men of the

countryside, as painted by Thackeray, Trollope, and George Eliot.

It is a familiar defence of this type that it plants "a gentleman" in every parish. But this argument cuts both ways. It plants in every parish an "upper-class" man with some official duty and authority. But that is the difficulty and the reproach of the Church. It belongs to a class, comes from a class, and acts and feels with its own class. The enormous corporate wealth of the Church, its constitution as a branch of the aristocratic constitution, with its prelates as peers of the realm, its close family connexion with the peerage and the landlords, and its dependence on governments and ministers, stamp it indelibly as a class institution. The sons of parsons are brought up practically with and in the same way as the squire's sons; they follow the same habits and pursue the same careers. The Rectory is a somewhat refined, somewhat less luxurious "Hall." Its Prelates are part of the Bureaucracy, bishops being Peers in everything but hereditary titles, and the other clerical offices analogous to Privy Councillors and Knights of lay orders.

It is impossible that such a Church can be the Church of the nation, the Church of the poor, that it can exercise any independent action *on* the nation or *in* the nation, or that it can look on the poor and the labouring masses, however kindly, however charitably, as anything but "the lower orders." For a generation now it has been using its whole strength to resist all people's reform, to resist

temperance legislation, and especially to resist the extension of free education to the masses, unless the control of it shall be placed in its own hands.

By its history, its constitution, its habits, and its social organisation, the Church of England is really and truly a phase, an order, a branch of the British aristocracy, using that term in its widest sense. It has all the merits and all the defects of the upper or governing class, its good qualities and its bad. It is, in a sense, public-spirited, national, large-minded, cultured, learned, active. It is not of the people, and it cannot be. It is neither sectarian, nor intolerant, nor ignorant, nor bigoted, as so many evangelical bodies are. But it is a class body, with class habits, thoroughly secularised and politically conservative, incapable of taking an independent spiritual authority, of checking or controlling the rich and the powerful. An Archbishop is seldom more than a rather unctuous echo of the leader of the Conservative party for the time being.

This interpretation and identification of the Church with the governing class—that is, the wealthier, cultured, trained order, or the “predominant partner” of British society—gives the Church its ascendancy, its adaptability, its capacity for evolution. The “predominant partner” is essentially growing, changing, moving towards reform—and that makes the strength of this nation. And the Church moves with it and passes into a new phase. Seventy years ago, when I was a schoolboy, Simeon Evangelicalism was dominant. Churches in

many places, both town and country, had as little ceremonial as any Baptist Chapel.

The Tractarian movement, from 1845 to 1850, altered all this. An immense reform in the Church ensued. Abuses were abolished, the scandalous greed and nepotism of Prelates ceased, the vulgarity and secularism of the parsonages abated, the neglect of the poor in the cities was remedied. In many, this became an imitation of Catholic social practices and æsthetic ritual. The practical impotence of Church discipline enabled a surreptitious form of Catholicism to creep in. It has amounted to a secret conspiracy, perhaps only to be condemned because it is secret and disingenuous. It may go further. But this sporadic, irregular, and cryptic Catholicism cannot last long or go very far—in face of a people saturated with the Bible, the habit of individual prayer, and abhorrence of priest-craft—and under the impulse of a priesthood which will not accept and dare not preach celibacy.

For any real Catholicism there has to be a celibate priesthood, a hierarchic discipline, and a consistent organisation. The bulk of Englishmen are not prepared for anything of the kind. They will not stand the “confessional,” miracle-working, sacred images, pilgrimages, and public processions. Ultimately it is likely that large bodies in the towns will frankly enter the Catholic pale, and so will the bulk of the aristocratic class. And the growing unpopularity of the Establishment in the country, along with the advance of democracy, will make Dis-

establishment a national cry, and the great residuum will lapse into secular bodies.

The vast change that has taken place in the Church of England since the middle of the last century has a double character. These are:—

(a) The tendency to Catholic creed, ritual, and discipline—constantly checked by the essentially lay, political, secular constitution of the Establishment.

(b) The tendency to throw off dogma and to develop some form of Neo-Christianity, generally of a vaguely Unitarian sort.

Along with this goes the relaxation of the Church system, the manifest impotence of episcopal authority and even of ecclesiastical tribunals, the acceptance of scientific thought and the public honour of notorious Agnostics, the eagerness to embark in social reform, Christian Socialism, which is only democracy in Gospel phraseology, and the scientific and historical analysis of scriptural texts and of Church history. In this work learned, devout, and honest churchmen have taken the leading part.

Under these two different but concurrent forces, the Church which, in its wide comprehension, could embrace both Neo-Catholic as well as Neo-Christian elements, has been rapidly changing for half a century. And we need not deplore the change on either side:—

(a) The devout, faithful, and emotional churchmen and churchwomen tended towards Catholicism

—the only permanent and essential form of Christianity.

(*b*) The more intellectual, educated, and vigorous churchmen were tending to hold a rational, sympathetic, and practical attitude towards the Christian Churches as a common phase in human civilisation and moral civilisation.

Unhappily a very different current has been setting in of late under the stress of party politics. The Church has been losing its national character of comprehension, and has been stiffening into an aggressive corporation, rapidly becoming a party machine. This change may be dated from the Disestablishment of the Irish Church and still more from the Gladstonian policy twenty-five years ago. In this generation we have seen the Church fling itself into the hands of one party in the State, sacrificing national and popular interests to its own constitution and privileges, even to the extent of allying itself with the interests of Alcohol, the Peerage, and Obscurantism. It has grown to be a branch of the Conservative caucus—a sort of Clerical Primrose League of the Cross.

In doing this it ceases to be national, and is becoming what it has so often denounced in other communions, by stamping itself as a *sect*—that is, a religious society which makes its primary interest the maintenance of its own doctrines and rights and ascendancy, and in defence of these will sacrifice national interests and the general public. To this there can be in our day but

one end—the deposition of the Church from the place of *national* prerogative, which it has abused and no longer attempts to fulfil. The House of Lords has fallen from its ancient prerogative because it persistently made itself the ally and tool of one political party in the State. For one generation (even for two generations) the Established Church has done the same and must pay the same penalty. The prerogatives and wealth it enjoys solely by Act of Parliament can be taken back to the nation by Act of Parliament so soon as the nation has grown conscious of its power to deal with all forms of reaction, however venerable by age and sentiment and however adorned with high qualities and pathetic traditions.



## CHAPTER X

### ORTHODOX DISSENT

IN passing from the Catholic Church and the Church of England to Dissent, we pass from Christian communities of a stable, definite, and highly elaborate creed, with systematic and artistic rituals, historic organisation and traditions, to a heterogeneous body of differing sects, exceedingly variable in their forms, government and dominant ideas.

I mean by Dissent, all communions calling themselves Christian and Protestant, accepting the Gospel, but not the Catholic nor the Anglican interpretation of it. And by Orthodox I mean the Protestant Christian Communities which accept the creeds; at any rate, the Apostles' creed, the Trinity and Atonement, the inspiration of the Scripture and the miraculous scheme of Salvation. That does not include Unitarians; at any rate, the new Unitarians, who regard Christ as a purely human teacher, and deny any miraculous character to His birth, resurrection, and atonement.

The Orthodox Dissenters differ from Churchmen not so much in cardinal doctrine, as in Church government, forms of worship, sacramental notions, functions of the ministry, and conditions of Church membership. Dissent does not only differ from the Churches, Anglican or Catholic, but it differs within itself. The shades and

varieties of Orthodox Dissent are almost infinite. Voltaire said that England was a country which had one hundred religions and only one sauce. But Voltaire was hardly up to date. The Registrar-General some years ago certified more than two hundred religious denominations who have opened places of public worship under distinctive separatist names, all being Orthodox Dissenters or Trinitarian Protestants, and belonging neither to the Catholic nor Anglican Churches. And the sects go on increasing year by year and no one could remember their names. There are Methodists and Benevolent Methodists, Free Methodists, Independent Methodists, Methodists of the Reform Union, Army Methodists, Modern Methodists, New Methodists, Primitive Methodists, Reform Methodists, Free Church Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Refuge Methodists, Temperance Methodists, United Free Methodists, Welsh Calvinist Methodists, Welsh Wesleyan Methodists. Then there are Baptists, Baptised Believers, Bunyan Baptists, Calvinistic Baptists, Congregational Baptists, General Baptists, Particular Baptists, New Connexion Baptists, New Connexion General Baptists, Old Baptists, Open Baptists, Presbyterian Baptists, Scotch Baptists, Seventh-Day Baptists, Strict Baptists, Union Baptists, Unitarian Baptists—15 Methodist, 18 Baptist connexions, 33 in all. Here are 33 registered shades of Methodist and Baptist! It is such things as this which bring to mind the thunderous outburst of Bossuet with which he opens his "History of Variations of

the Protestant Churches," a book in the Positivist Library. He says:—

"If Protestants only knew how their religion has been formed, with how many variations, with what continual changes their creeds have been constructed; how they first split off from us, and then from one another; by what subtleties and sophisms and equivocations they have tried to repair their divisions and to gather up the scattered members of their disunited Reformation—this Reformation of which they boast would not appear so satisfying as they imagine. No! to speak plainly, it would rouse them to contempt."

And he goes on to show how from the beginning the Catholic Church has held one plain uniform doctrine, whilst heresies have been a constant succession of different and incompatible doctrines, with infinite novelties that never endure, but are driven out by fresh novelties as shallow. However, the Catholic verities, resting not in logic and human ingenuity, but on divine inspiration, are always unchanging—always clear, uniform, authoritative. Once abandon the Truth committed to the Church, and endless disputations and novel explanations result, he says.

I should be sorry indeed to guarantee the Church history of the eloquent Bishop of Meaux, "The Eagle," as a learned English historian calls him; and I consider a creed that remains unchanged for 1800 years to be *ipso facto* convicted of falsehood—and not only of falsehood, but of mischievous falsehood. And I should

agree with the Protestants that novelty and variation, growth, and very wide divergence of opinion is a sign of vitality, reality, and honesty of mind and purpose in a scientific and rational system of belief.

But the two hundred Orthodox Dissenting Sects are very far from claiming or desiring a scientific and rational system of belief. They hold fixed, unchangeable dogma quite as much as the Bishop. They assert the Gospel to be always as clear, uniform, authoritative, and God-given and God-inspired as the Bishop contends that the Church is. But each communion, however small, local, ignorant, and recent, claims to have the only true key to this Gospel, and that all the one hundred and ninety-nine others are wrong; and it is ready to argue the point with texts till human nature is exhausted. One of the sects registering a place of worship is that of "Christians who own no name but the Lord Jesus." I suppose all Orthodox Dissenters say that too—for we cannot think this sect denies the other persons of the Trinity or asserts that the Lord Jesus is self-created. But evidently they think they have a clue to the inner meaning of the Gospel which all other Christians have missed.

Here, then, we have an endless variety of sects interminably disputing about very small points of ceremonial, discipline, organisation, or Bible interpretation, yet all based upon the divine revelation of a body of treatises some two or three thousand years old, all claiming to have a religion that was once for all delivered to

men nearly two thousand years ago, and which rests on a body of unintelligible mysteries and miracles that no human mind can fathom, but which every simple man, woman, and child has to expound for itself in direct communion with the Creator.

The great dominant fact in all Orthodox Dissent is that it is *not established*, not connected with the State, has no public money, is wholly free from any control or interference outside its own body. And this is no accident or minor incident. It touches the essence of the Christian scheme. An Established Church, whether Anglican, or Irish, or Scotch, as the Gallican Church was under Louis XIV, XV, and XVI, or the Russian Church now, or the Byzantine Church under Justinian and his successors—any established Church taking its laws from the State, its revenues, with all its professional interests bound up with Governments and Rulers, becomes a temporal and not a spiritual society; it is an official department, it is a black police, a clerical bureaucracy. It loses the power, the will, the right even to check or control the excesses of civil tyranny or misgovernment. It may have learning, dignity, a noble ceremonial, individual virtues, and external decorum—all this the established Church of Ireland had—perhaps the most outrageously unjust and unchristian Church known to modern ages. But a Church which is a department of Government, and whose whole organisation and attitude is controlled by laymen and temporal governments, is a Church which cuts itself off from the

central, true, essential function of a Christian and spiritual communion—which is to stand between power and the weak, between rich and poor, to abate ambition, greed, and arrogance in the great, and to raise, civilise, and spiritualise the people as a spiritual order and influence above the very suspicion of favouring the strong and the masterful. It sells its birthright if it gives up this. All Orthodox Dissenters in England are free from this reproach. They are not a clerical bureaucracy, not creatures of the State.

The result is that almost all those movements in our country which urge moral and spiritual considerations in great social and national and international questions come from the Orthodox Dissenters, and never from the Church. You might as well expect a mere party journal to raise its voice on any moral or spiritual question in opposition to the official programme of its own party as look for such intervention from an established clergy. But the non-established Dissenters are free to do this, and they often raise their voices boldly and nobly. Who have been foremost in appealing to their countrymen to do away with the horrors of the slave trade and abolish slavery? Not the Church officially; the Friends—the Orthodox Dissenters. Some individual Churchmen, but not the bishops, not prelates and dignitaries. Who are foremost for peace; who mainly freed us from the brutalities of past times, abominations of infant cruelty, cruelty to brutes; who were foremost during the American Civil War in sympathising with

the efforts to get rid of slavery? Not bishops, not the official Church, but Dissenters. Who rose up in 1880 to protest against jingoism and all the sanguinary and wanton acts of aggression committed to appease the Juggernaut of Empire? Not the Church, but the Nonconformists; and now, in all the efforts which are made to purify our daily life and to put down some of the worst forms of public obscenity, the brunt of the burden is left to Orthodox Dissenters, whilst the Church turns away its face, pretending not to see the evil thing—perhaps to conceal its smile as debauchees are shouting out their mockery at the Nonconformist conscience. The brunt of the struggle falls on the Nonconformist conscience. This is their high honour and public service that they have not sold the birthright of a Christian community, and still feel it to be a mission of the Gospel preacher to uphold morals and purify life.

I am far from thinking the Nonconformist conscience right in things practical. I think it often extremely wrong—dangerously, absurdly wrong. But that is from its lamentable ignorance of practical things and its confidence in transcendental and unreal dogmas which it substitutes for scientific and practical knowledge of worldly things and worldly wisdom. In the language now so often held about the Turkish Empire and the people of Islam, in the readiness of all evangelical enthusiasts to fall in with an anti-Mussulman, anti-pagan fanaticism, they are often wrong—partly because they are usually both ignorant of and unconcerned

with practical human politics as a whole and systematic sociology—a very complex and difficult study—partly because the arbitrary and narrow figments about the scheme of Salvation have extirpated in them the human, moral, and social point of view. In their violent and one-sided enthusiasm about the suffering of Christians in Turkey—very shocking, but not worse than what Russians have done, or men in Southern America, or even the British in Africa and Asia—they would bring all Europe to the verge of a terrible war, a thousand times more injurious to civilisation than any cruelties inflicted by Oriental Governments. The famed Nonconformist conscience is often woefully wrong, in my opinion, about enforcing temperance, public morals, about peace—and there are times, I admit, when it becomes more mischievous and wrong than the apathy and servility of the Church (an apathy and servility produced partly by higher knowledge and better point of political view in the Church, and mainly because the Church is the chaplain to the State and the powers that be). Wrong and mischievous the Nonconformist conscience often is in practical result, but it means well: it seeks to do its duty; it is independent; only it is too often ignorant of facts and entirely wrong-headed about political principles, for which it is anxious to substitute the Sermon on the Mount.

But a more serious question remains. How far does this independence go? Is it complete and genuine? We do not find the Orthodox Dissenter deliberately



becoming a tool of the State. But there are times when certain sects have attached themselves to party, and in some ways that is as bad, or worse. I doubt if any sect in our own time has flung itself into the arms of party leaders with so unscrupulous an alacrity, and made itself a caucus of a political party so openly, as we have seen the Established Church do in Ireland, in Scotland, in England. But a Protestant sect we do often see make an alliance with a political party, originally, no doubt, to gain some religious freedom that it fairly could claim, and afterwards degenerate into an overt party hack. We have seen this—and a pitiful sight it is. A Church which defiles itself with a political party is lost.

Nor is this the worst of it. Orthodox Nonconformists have no temptation to ally themselves with the State, and where they ally themselves with a political party it is usually a natural result of all their traditions and associations. But a far more subtle and widely-extended evil is the unconscious and intangible alliance of a Dissenting Church with wealth—not, perhaps, with great wealth, but with the comfortable, well-to-do orders of the middle classes. These are the paymasters, the trustees, the elders, and chapel committee, and too often their wishes, prejudices, interests, and even their enmities are the only things that their faithful minister cares to consider. What a contrast is this to the Catholic priesthood in Ireland, with its care for the poor and the weak. In the country parishes, no doubt, the Noncon-

formist is essentially the spiritual Church of the poor, and often is manfully zealous for their interests. But in the great urban populations it is not so as a rule. In towns it may be doubted if the Orthodox Dissenting Churches are as careful of the suffering and the poor, or do as much civilising work amongst the very poor, as the Catholic Church; and, indeed, as much as the Establishment in its urban parishes. This noble independence of power in Nonconformity does not go the whole way. It stands aloof from Governments. It does not stand aloof from wealth and the comfortable affluence of the trading classes. Not that it goes after money—but it goes “where money is.”

Obviously the besetting vice of Orthodox Dissent is narrowness of interest—a short-sighted devotion to one class or even one coterie or group, and this is very largely due to general narrowness of knowledge, habit of mind, and social interests. With all its worn-out prejudices and intolerant doctrine, the Catholic Church is not narrow in this sense. Nor is the Church of England narrow. On the contrary, I showed in the last essay its comprehensiveness, its learning, culture, and tolerant temper. There can be little doubt that the average Orthodox Dissenter is far inferior in learning, culture, and breadth of view and nature to the average Churchman, take clergy and leading laymen all together. Matthew Arnold would have said that they would not be Dissenters unless they had been of inferior culture, but we need not take all Matthew

Arnold's epigrams as true. Not a few of them were emanations of his own class prejudices, the arrogance of his Academic associations. It has long been said that it was a sorry jest of the Church to reproach Nonconformity with its want of learning and culture—inasmuch as the Church had enough influence with the State and the legislating classes by law to monopolise the great schools, the universities, and to shut them in the face of its rivals, so that it had created the want of Culture it condemned. But this rejoinder is losing very much of its point, for the universities have now been open for some thirty years, and many excellent schools have been open for a generation for all denominations. But the proportion of Orthodox Dissenters who avail themselves of the highest culture open to them is still curiously small. Many reasons concur. There are very wealthy Dissenters, but the bulk of the orthodox sects are accustomed to more economical lives than the average Churchman. They have a far smaller proportion of young men destined to a leisured life; their ministry are trained in separate denominational schools and colleges, and no doubt very largely they shrink, as do most Catholics and some Jews, from education alongside of Churchmen.

But the main obstacle to the higher culture of Orthodox Dissent is—that culture is not so highly valued, is not sought, not needed so much as with Churchmen. It is the same cause—the essential narrowness of view, partly arising from historic, partly from intellectual

conditions. Orthodox Dissent originally took hold of the lower middle class, and it has never very seriously made way, up or down, beyond that. It has a narrow and somewhat primitive creed, it lives its own life in the same order of men. It has no great need for high culture and no real belief in it.

In dealing with the Church of England, I said that in contrast with Catholic Christianity its great and glaring deficiency was that it has no real administrative organisation: at least, that its organisation was largely secular, in the hands of the State or of "patrons"; that Government nominated the rulers of the Church, and took good care to put in none but very safe men, given to compromise and half measures, or else that "patrons" nominated to livings and the parson could treat his parish as his own freehold, whilst the legal and administrative machinery of the Church had not coercive authority and was not a working reality. Now neither of these things can be said of Orthodox Dissent. As a rule it exhibits a very vigorous Church administration, and also in many denominations a very serious discipline over persons. Most Protestant Nonconformists do govern themselves and do exercise a real authority over the lives and morality of members.

First as to Church organisation. It is real, but it is far too much associated with temporal power—that is to say, it too often falls into the hands of laymen of wealth or business energy, so that the ministers of many communions may not be in the hands of a patron, but

of a junta of patrons. And unhappily the whole organisation of Protestant Nonconformity rests in almost all cases on a democratic basis. Congregations elect their preacher, elect their elders—everything is at least nominally on a basis of election like a vestry or a county council. I am not about to discuss the general principle of democracy, and am not speaking about politics or temporal affairs, where other considerations properly apply. But in the intellectual and spiritual realm we are not ready to concede that the teacher should be chosen by the taught. Professors at universities are not elected by undergraduates, and in our halls, at any rate, we will maintain the principle on which Positivism as an intellectual and spiritual organisation rests—that *election* is not a natural basis for the creation of a true moral and spiritual authority. Much of the narrowness, the woodenness, the sectarian spirit of the Orthodox Nonconformist arises doubtless from this—that its “Light and Leading” is nominated, controlled, and worked out of the depths of its own most ignorant and most narrow-minded strata, and that its spiritual and religious standard has to be continually adjusted to the bigotry and commonplace of its own constituents. Nomination to high office in the Church by Prime Ministers and Cabinets, with all its vices, does not so thoroughly depress and vulgarise the tone of the pastors as does this incessant election by laymen who are in knowledge and by habit the least of all competent to select.

The moral discipline over members is a more serious

thing, and it is often a very powerful force—at times a cruel and persecuting and unjust force. But it exists in many communions. And what the Catholic Church does by its confessional and sacerdotal authority, some Protestant communities do effect by the jealous watchfulness of Church membership. A power so great and so capable of abuse will often lead to evil results. It can hardly be otherwise. The abuses of the Confessional may be sometimes paralleled by the cruel slanders and back-bitings of pharisaical Christian bigotry. Absolute and subjective figments necessarily lead men perilously near to hypocrisy, self-deception, pharisaical self-righteousness and cruel injustice. But perhaps the larger part of this failure, like that of the Catholic Confessional, is the result of an arbitrary and fantastic creed, not based on human nature and not inspired with pure, sound social ideals. Those who are always thinking about heaven and mansions in the sky are always going wrong on morals.

I have spoken with a personal sense of admiration and sympathy of the poetic and pathetic ritual which the Church of England has inherited and adapted from the Catholic and mediæval ceremonial. And when we turn to the Nonconformist ritual there is little to be said, for the special note of Nonconformity is to eliminate ritual as far as possible. The great dividing line, indeed, between the Church and the Protestant Dissenters is that the Church retains an antique and set ritual, with elaborate and artistic formularies, and the

Dissenter trusts to the spontaneous inspiration of worshipper or minister, and abhors rituals and formularies altogether. Nonconformists differ; but in ideal they would, I suppose, get rid of all prescribed forms of words and would even sing extempore hymns if it were possible to extemporise a congregational hymnology. And this absence of all set words reaches its highest point with Friends, who sit for long spaces in silence—each worshipper secretly offering his own supplication.

The problem of a fixed Ritual and a formal Liturgy as against spontaneous prayer and individual meditations is a very complex and subtle one, on which we cannot now enter. It goes very deep down to the basic meaning of worship and prayer. From the point of view of the direct communing between the soul of the believer and the Creator, ritual and formularies are a mere obstacle and scandal. And this is the essential view of Protestant Nonconformity. But from the point of view of the stirring of the soul by congregational communion and the moral and spiritual inspiration of beautiful and familiar language, of the potent magic of tradition, and the reverential acceptance of sacerdotal guidance, the ritual conception of worship is the natural and efficient one. This latter is the dominant idea of the Catholic Church—and the Church of England (true to its ideal of compromise) has very largely accepted this view—the ecclesiastical, the sacerdotal, the artistic conception of worship. And Catho-

lics and all Episcopal Churches stand as the ritualist Churches against the Protestant Nonconformists—the non-ritualist or anti-ritualist bodies.

No doubt this is the primitive Gospel Christ-like view of prayer and worship. But in our view it is none the better for that. In societies where the consciousness of direct communion of the soul and the Creator is overpoweringly true, real, and spontaneous, this idea holds. But as this belief weakens and disappears the non-ritual worship loses all *raison d'être*. St. Giles' Church in Edinburgh, when I first knew it in 1849, was a strict non-episcopal chapel. In 1911 it is like an Anglican cathedral, or, at least, what many an Anglican cathedral was 60 years ago. Now even the smallest Bethel in a cotton town has ceased to be repulsively ugly. Music involves ritual. Ritual implies art. And music, art, ritual, formularies, and traditions must finally eliminate spontaneous extempore outpouring of spirit.

Any honest review of the progress of evangelical religion will show us how far English Dissent of to-day has receded from the boiling zeal and Gospel passion of Latimer and Knox, Bunyan and Fox, even Wesley and Whitefield. The fires are dying down and the head of steam is growing weak in the great historic Protestant engine. To us the outpourings of some Boanerges do seem a strange and unmeaning performance. We know how often they are mere cant and form to the speaker as well as to the hearers. To my-



self, I find nothing more tedious than a meeting-house of Friends sitting and looking at each other mutely till the Holy Ghost may descend on a brother. As more and more men come to share our own disbelief in these communities, so the non-ritual Chapels will grow emptier, whilst the ritual Churches may hold on for a time by virtue of their grand art, their impressive traditions, their poetry and the sympathetic power of their majestic liturgy and ancient organisation.

But there is something far deeper than ritual which divides the Episcopal Church from Protestant Non-conformity—that is, the Bible as the sole source of Religious Truth and Direction. That is what is meant by the “Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion.” This the Catholic Church never has accepted, for it practically puts the Church above and beyond the Bible as the interpreter of the Divine Gospel. And the Church of England, in its double-tongued way, in spite of the words of its Sixth Article, cannot bring itself quite to part from this Catholic theory. But the Protestant Dissenters cling to the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, and (more than that) every man has to read, comprehend, and expound his Bible for himself. That is the source of what Bossuet called the incessant variations, sophisms, disputations, and equivocations which, from the days of Luther and Calvin, marked Protestantism, but especially mark Protestant Dissent with its two hundred separate communions.

And now see the formidable consequences of this fatal, narrow policy of Luther's in building religion on the foundation of a Book—on the sandy foundations, not, indeed, of a book, but of a heterogeneous, miscellaneous, and half spurious literature. Everyone knows that the Bible is not a book, but a miscellany of Hebrew writings of totally different origin and of dates that perhaps cover 1,000 years. Legends, old ballads, priestly forgeries, moral apophthegms, war-songs, lyrical poetry, ethical, devotional, and erotic, together with a copious collection of loose, miraculous, legendary Lives of the Saints, some grand sermons, ending with a celestial rhapsody. Such is the miscellaneous collection we call the Bible—not a book, but a medley of writings. Imagine that Beowulf and some Saxon war songs, Bede's history, King Alfred's poems, the Saxon Chronicle, Ancren Riwe, Piers the Plowman, Latimer's sermons, Knox and Fox's homilies, Lord Byron's "Cain," and Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" were bound up in one volume and dubbed the British Bible.

I am not going into the archæology of the Bible. I am not about to pledge myself to all the ingenious guesses of the German critics. I dare say they have started nearly as many gratuitous guesses and figments as they have detected in the old Hebrew literature. Professor Sayce now says that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Perhaps he did, though it seems a long draft on one's credulity.

Still, no mind of strict honesty and serious culture

will long continue to believe that the Bible, from I Genesis to Revelation xxii., is the direct, infallible revelation of the will of the Almighty Creator of the Universe. That we are to take it all as literally true—from I. Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" down to the last words of Revelation: "He that taketh from or addeth to this book shall be afflicted with plagues, and his name blotted from the book of life"—it is impossible to suppose that honest and educated minds can permanently remain in this condition. And yet, when this belief in the literal verbal inspiration and full revelation in the Bible as the sole source of God's will disappears, the bottom is knocked out of Orthodox Nonconformity, the dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of Protestants, and it stands a religion with its Christian Commandments shivered into atoms.

That is the gulf to which, as to a Niagara, the full stream of Orthodox Dissent is steadily and smoothly hurrying. When the Bible is knocked from under its feet as the sole revelation of God, it is hanging in the air over the abyss—for it has neither tradition, antiquity, Church, organisation, ritual, ceremonial, art, or poetry to fall back on.

The Catholic Church has these, and it has never planted itself on a Book which two or three ingenious pedants may blow into the air—not, indeed, as a noble and beautiful collection of legends, poetry, and lyrical effusion of soul—but as authentic history, as rational

biography and as divine revelation. And this is the reason why, at the outset, I began by calling the Catholic Church the only permanent and essential form of Christianity that we could recognise.

The Church of England must in the same process receive a tremendous shock. When its Bible is gone, its Protestantism must go too. It will have to fall back on its noble ritual, its splendid traditions of learning and piety, on its grand poetry, and on its very feeble and make-believe episcopal and ecclesiastical organisation. That is something, and will suffice to save to it a remnant when the crash comes. But for the dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion I cannot see what future remains in that day—that inevitable day—except infinite subdivisions and mere word-splitting and a steady sinking down to the strata of the lowest ignorance and the most obstinate cant.

## CHAPTER XI

### NEO-CHRISTIANITY

HALF a century or more ago a bold movement was started by some able and earnest priests of the Church of England who, on various grounds, were unable to endure the stereotyped dogmas and the literal inspiration of scriptures current in all sections of the orthodox Christian world. A Bishop of London took an ornamental rather than a serious part in the movement. A famous Colonial bishop took an independent and somewhat pedantic line of his own. Some of the most eminent and most learned authorities of Oxford took part in it. And a popular and influential dignitary of the Church, the Dean of Westminster, strong in the favour of the public and the Court, flung himself to their help with chivalrous ardour. There was nothing very new in the movement except in one thing.

For at least a generation previously some Church dignitaries and learned priests had made it clear that there was much in the conventional orthodoxy that they held only in a loose and figurative manner; and that the conventional view of the Bible as the literal and complete Word of God could hardly stand critical examination. Of course, men wholly outside the Church had long felt, if they did not express, the same thing. What was new in the attempt was an organised and sys-

tematic movement by priests of wide authority and great learning in the Church to put together what really amounted to a new and, so to speak, merely colourable view of the whole scheme of Christian theology, and to make perfectly free criticism of the entire Bible, Old and New Testament, an open question in the pulpits of the Establishment.

A violent and prolonged agitation arose, and a very formidable struggle seemed at hand. Criticism of the Bible and distaste for the central dogmas of theology had gone so deep into the mind of the cultured world, so many powerful laymen in the Church were avowed Gallios, that attempts to prosecute the principal leaders practically failed, though a few minor expulsions and secessions were effected. The Church of England, or, rather, its political masters, acted with characteristic astuteness. The Church, true to its traditions of compromise, gave up the attempt to make martyrs of the new heretics. But it managed to make them understand that the thing must not be carried further; and to reassure the ignorant mass of the laity that, however elastic might be the comprehensiveness of the Church, it had no intention of accepting a sceptical reformation in the direction of German latitudinarianism. It was the old story. The prisoner at the bar was acquitted, with a pretty sharp reprimand not to do it again. The first of the *Septem contra Christum* explained away his part in the business, and was made a bishop and soon an archbishop. Several of the others received offices of author-

ity. Torrents of orthodox theology were poured out against the new views. The Privy Council, it was said, had "dismissed Hell with costs." But withal, though the heretic priests and professors seemed to come out of the ordeal in triumph, they carried the attempt no further, and they had no successors within the Church.

At the time the term "Neo-Christianity" was given to the movement by the *Westminster Review*; and I take this new word as describing any attempt to construct a totally new version of the Christian religion and a view of the Bible as a most interesting and edifying body of antique writings, having no special claim to be regarded as inspired or even as unique. Although the new movement was careful to avoid any formal defiance of the Creeds and Articles, it suggested that the miraculous element must be discarded from the whole Christian doctrine, and that the Bible was neither infallible nor even inspired in any special sense, and not free from gross corruption and even evil teaching. This new view of the Christian religion was really a far greater change than was the Protestant from the Catholic faith, than was Neo-Platonism from the original Academy, or even Arianism from Trinitarianism.

It must be said that the movement as one possible within the Church failed. The leading spirits who started it made no serious attempt to develop or promulgate it; and their subsequent utterances tended rather towards orthodoxy. They formed no school and left no successors in the Anglican priesthood. Their

movement was, indeed, one of the primary causes of a great rally towards orthodoxy and high-Catholic tendencies within the Church. The Church tended rather towards the Catholic than the latitudinarian phase. The movement, of course, went on, but rather with the laity and outside the Church. Twenty years after the explosion, one of the Seven Champions declared that now Liberal Churchmen had to lurk about in byways like gypsies. The movement went on; it grew and flourished amongst laymen. But the clergymen whose consciences impelled them to join it, left or were brought up outside the Church of England. Neo-Christianity still exists; but it exists only as a casual survival within the ranks of the Anglican priesthood.

Neo-Christianity still, I say, exists and flourishes; and it must long be a most interesting and important element in the evolution of religion. It is a movement with which it is impossible for us who take a positive, *i.e.*, a scientific view of the entire religious problem—not to feel sympathy and hearty alliance. In one sense, indeed, the Religion of Humanity is a type of Neo-Christianity carried out to a strictly logical conclusion. The idea of Neo-Christianity is this:—To retain the ethical and emotional spirit of the Gospel, whilst discarding its miraculous machinery, and its claim to rest on a divine revelation. It magnifies the Humanity of Christ, and values the Bible for its noble teaching, not for its divine origin. Well! in a sense that is our idea also. We magnify the humanity not only of Christ and his



Apostles, but of all great teachers and leaders of mankind. We reverence not any particular Son of Man, but all great and good Sons of Man. We have an army of Saviours, of Messiahs, of Martyrs, Apostles, and Prophets—most of them recorded in perfectly authentic and trustworthy Gospels. We value the Bible for its noble teaching, sublime poetry and moral power; but we think that some other collections of human wisdom and imagination are quite on a level with it, and may properly correct and supplement it.

We are not Atheists, revilers of Christianity, or Secularists who discard all religion. We have every wish to preserve and honour the essence of the Gospel and the essence of the Bible. As we so often say, Christianity is a real part of our religion, in some ways the deepest, purest, most affecting part of it. We are quite aware that the Christian phase of religious evolution is as yet the most exalted and most efficient. Thus we, too, are in a sense Neo-Christians. We seek for a Reformation and radical regeneration and recasting of Christianity. Only the difference is, that we are also Neo-Pagans, Neo-Theocrats, Neo-Fetichists, as well. And hence we cannot accept the special title of Neo-Christians, which would give false impressions. Still, so far as Neo-Christians seek to magnify the *Humanity* of Jesus, to insist on the power of the Bible, and not on its origin—we must heartily go with the whole Neo-Christian movement.

But whatever sympathy we feel with Neo-Christ-

ianity in the abstract, it is difficult to feel that sympathy for it inside the Established Church. How can Neo-Christianity and Establishment, *i.e.*, Official and State-created monopoly, hold together? The Thirty-nine Articles, the Formularies and Articles are of the essence of the Establishment, and to force these to admit Neo-Christianity is a feat of jugglery. With the immense transformation of ideas involved in eliminating the miraculous element from Christianity and putting the Bible on the level of all other ancient literature—how can the Church of England claim to hold its place of prerogative, to have its prelates in Parliament, to monopolise the vast revenues given by our ancestors to the Catholic Church—and yet to exclude pious and orthodox believers in the Creeds and the Bible, men like Dr. Martineau or Dr. Clifford? The Church is a Church based on Compromise, and prone to Comprehension, but what can Compromise and Comprehension mean if the Church is to teach that Christ is on the level of any ordinary man and the Bible on the level of any ordinary Book? And in order to stretch the Articles and Prayer-book to cover all this, what an immense amount of prevarication and dishonest adaptation of plain words would it involve! Macaulay said that Cranmer's fitness to organise the Church of England was that he was "unscrupulous and a timeserver." But it would require many Cranmers to adjust the Anglo-Catholic Church with a new Neo-Christian Liturgy and latitudinarian Articles in lieu of its Calvinistic Articles.

Neo-Christianity outside the Church is, however, a very different thing, and is the practical religion of some of the best and most cultivated people of our day. I shall try to examine its claims to be the faith of the future with entire sympathy and impartiality.

Neo-Christianity is by its very nature an exceedingly elastic and comprehensive form of thought. It takes a great many shapes and admits a variety of types. Its essence is to develop all that is of the moral and spiritual essence of the Gospel and of the ideal of Christ, whilst attenuating or minimising that side of it which rational and scientific philosophy rejects. And as the Gospel of Christ and his history and mission are bound up with the Biblical Record, the Neo-Christian purpose is to magnify all that is beautiful in the Bible and minimise its authority as an inspired book and authentic history. Obviously, this is a process which admits of infinite degrees of more or less. And hence these schools of thought exhibit almost every possible degree of rationality and criticism both as to doctrine and as to the Scripture.

Now, we say that no *degree* in rationality and honesty of criticism is possible; that you cannot stop half way. Rational philosophy does its work so thoroughly that the essence of the Gospel is left without any intellectual basis whatever—other than the current of all the philosophy and all the religions that preceded it. With our modern knowledge, the Bible is a collection of writings so miscellaneous, so crude, and,

in part, so corrupt and spurious, that it is only in part valuable, and nowhere has any authority except that of early Oriental literature in general. But when we have got as far as this—and once on the Neo-Christian stream there is no stopping short of it—Neo-Christianity ceases to be in any definite sense Christianity at all. It has no right to treat Christianity as a special or prerogative form of Religion. It has no right to depreciate the preceding types of thought and religion. What is it, then, in this form? It is, or it ought to be, the Religion of Humanity—Humanity which is ready not only to rationalise Christianity, but to rationalise Polytheism and Theocracy and even Fetichism—which treats with the same reverential criticism not only the Hebrew Bible, but all the Bibles of Mankind.

A very large proportion of devout and intelligent persons, calling themselves Christians inside and outside the Church, now are very shy of certain miraculous events and of certain parts of Scripture. Jonah and the Whale, Joshua ordering the Sun to stand still, the curse of the whole human race because Adam and Eve ate an apple, the walls of Jericho and the herd of swine—stagger even Anglican priests—and so do such parts of the Bible as the 34th and 38th chapters of Genesis, and the 109th Psalm. I have heard a most devout priest in the Church hurry over these brutal chapters, quite inaudible from shame and disgust. Creditable to his good feeling, but most illogical. These grotesque myths and outbursts of obscene passion stand

on just the same footing as the record of Christ's Incarnation and Ascension—they are just as much or as little the word of God—they ought to stand or fall with each other, and if all the absurdities and all the brutalities were cut out of the Bible it would be a thing of shreds and patches, and a bowdlerised Bible would be a fancy paraphrase and emendation of our own. *We* do not find the crudities and extravagances of the Bible at all different in kind from those we read of in Homer and Hesiod, the “Arabian Nights,” or the “Nibelungen Lied,” and they do not shock or distress *us* more than those. But by what right does any Christian claim to say, “This story in the Bible is too ridiculous to believe, this sentiment is too immoral to attribute it to God. I can believe the other miracles which are not so incredible, I can swallow the War-Songs, but not the Song of Solomon. I can put up with the story of Sisera, but not with that of Tamar. I can believe that Jesus ascended into Heaven, but not that Elijah did. This is rather too much for me!”

Well! all this is utterly unreasonable. It is not as if they had discovered that certain books, parts, or chapters of the Bible were interpolations and spurious, or that the Bible offered any clue to show what in it was revealed by God, and what was inserted by man. Not at all! The only test they pretend to rely on as to the authenticity or authority of any miraculous tale, or any moral doctrine in the Bible, is their own opinion about what is possible and what is moral. There are

things, they say, God could not, or would not, do: there are things He never did, never could approve. Why? Because they themselves, in their human experience, and out of their human conscience, do not think them possible or right. That is simply making a Bible for themselves, and a scheme of religious truth for themselves. No educated lay Christians, and very few intelligent priests in the Church, nowadays believe the first chapter of Genesis to be a literal and true account of the Creation of the World. Bishops tell us not to take it in any literal sense. We may imagine (we are told) it means anything which seems to us plausible. But the educated priest, speaking to thoughtful people, does not now profess to believe that God made the Earth before He made the Sun, and made the Light without any Sun, and made the Sun to give light to the Earth by day. No sensible man believes that. On what ground, then, does he believe the rest of Genesis and the Pentateuch? Few sensible clergymen addressing cultivated people say much nowadays about Hell-fire. Why do they still continue to talk about Heavenly crowns and mansions in the Sky? For my part I find it less difficult to believe that Jonah was in the whale's belly than that Mary, the wife of Joseph, was mother to the Second Person of the Trinity by the Third Person of the Trinity. That is my difficulty.

The ground on which men refuse to believe that Joshua commanded the Sun to stand still for a whole day, in order that the Hebrews might take a bloody

vengeance on their enemies is that they do not believe such a stupendous violation of the laws of nature to be possible, and do not believe that God was a party to so merciless a massacre. That is to put their own knowledge of science to be above the Revelation of the Bible, and their own ideas of right and wrong to determine those of God. Very right and sensible—but they ought to be consistent. And consistency requires them to bring the whole scheme of religious truth to the same test of scientific law, to accept nothing in their creed which is not strictly conformable to modern science, and to take the most enlightened form of human ethics as the measure of right and wrong, and not the imaginary deity of a tribe of nomad Arabs. And when they have done this, why should the Christian scheme or the Bible of the Jews be put on a special pinnacle?

I will now take the case of those who thoroughly accept this as a necessary issue of the Neo-Christian movement—who can admit no kind of miracle at all, or any violation of scientific reality, who admit no special revelation in the Bible, other than the Revelation in Dante or Milton, and who are willing to test all the narratives of Scripture on the same principles of criticism that they apply to Herodotus or Livy. Whether they accept the term Christians or Neo-Christians, or not—they may call themselves Unitarians, Free Christians, or the like—they regard the essence of the Gospel as the root of religion, and they take the

New Testament as the supreme Sacred Book. They do not reject the term Christian if it be allowed them without any limitation of creed, rite, or sacramental meaning. They are, indeed, Neo-Christians, whether they like the term or not. They are not simple *Theists*, because they give supreme religious value to the teaching of Jesus, and of his Apostles. This view that the moral and social essence of Christianity will remain *supreme* when the *doctrines* of Christianity are discarded, and when the Gospels and Epistles have ceased to be in any sense a *revelation*, is a very general view, but it is one which is utterly illogical and visionary. I say, of course, will remain *supreme*—for, in our own sense, the moral and social essence of Christianity will remain valuable and potent when harmonised with the essence of other religious ideas. We have no wish or expectation to see the essence of Christianity disappear; we hope to see it incorporated with the religion of the future, and giving it a vital and spiritual energy. But to see it *supreme*—with any special prerogative—would be as unreasonable as to expect that the law of Mosaism and Hebraism would remain supreme when Paul had expressly destroyed the literal and paramount authority of Moses and his commentators, the Pharisees and Scribes. Peter did think so—but Peter was wrong and was rebuked. It would be as unreasonable as for a Neo-Platonist to suppose that the Platonic Philosophy would still remain supreme when Christianity had shown how much vague senti-



ment it contained and how much real abomination it condoned. Hypatia of Alexandria thought this. But Hypatia was torn in pieces by the Christian mob, and Neo-Platonism perished with her. It would be as unreasonable as if Neo-Catholics had believed that the essence of Catholicism would remain supreme amongst Protestants who denounced the Pope and the Council of Trent.

Let us consider what is really implied in the rejection of the miraculous element, and of special revelation. If it means more than rejection of some particular narrative, or book or part of Scripture, if it means a disbelief that the laws of nature are ever arbitrarily suspended—and this is what all serious Neo-Christians come to—it means this, that Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, a young carpenter of Galilee, was an enthusiast who propounded a sort of moral reformation amongst the Jews, but either thought he was, or allowed his followers to say he was, the son of God, and after preaching for some years, and allowing the ignorant mob around him to think that he made miraculous cures and raised people from the dead, was executed as a leader of sedition by the Romans, duly buried, but his followers stole his body and declared that he had risen into Heaven. That is what the Incarnation, the Miracles, the Atonement Sacrifice, Resurrection and Ascension come to—on rational interpretation. Nothing else is possible.

Then as to the Bible. A century or two after these

events, a number of casual and oral narratives got compiled into various books, four of which have in one form or another come down to us; but these four differ widely from each other, especially as to the birth and death of Christ, of which essentials the most spiritual and Christlike of the Gospels does not tell us one word. The books are all full of miraculous legends—not one of which (on our hypothesis) can be true. It is quite uncertain when, or by whom, and in what language they were written, or even when and where they began to be taken as revealed truth. Some of the letters of the Apostles are genuine and most impressive and noble productions. Others are spurious, and are fanatical rhapsodies. In any case, the Gospels and the letters, taken all together, show that Jesus had one idea of his mission, Paul had one totally different, and the Apostles were divided, quarrelled, and formed rival and antagonistic sects. That is what Christians call the New Testament—but what all Neo-Christians, who reject Miracles and Revelation, must consider these books to be.

It has been argued most powerfully that when we have taken this view of Christ and his mission and life, and this view of the Testament, all reason for specially idealising Christ, or attributing special sanctity to the Gospel, completely vanishes. It is worse than a mistake. It is mere distortion of human history, a depravation of honest morals, and treason to the great men who have laboured, taught, and died for Human-

ity. Positivists never undervalue all that is beautiful in the life and teaching of Jesus. We do not deny the pathos, the heroism, the sacrifice of Christ and his followers. But we know that Jesus was only one of many Messiahs, many Saviours, many Sons of Man, many Redeemers. We honour and love him, but we honour and love them. And loyalty to them forbids us to exalt him to the right-hand of the Father or any other pre-eminence, or to speak of him with bated breath and capital letters.

It has been well said—if Jesus was only a young Jewish Reformer, and the story of his life nothing but garbled fables that floated on the turbid stream of credulous tradition, there is nothing so stupendous or so tragic in the life and death of Jesus. The Legend of Pity (as an eminent Agnostic has called it) is pathetic enough, but is only one of a thousand "Legends of Pity," most of them far more trustworthy than that of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The myth that the Son of God—the coequal of the Creator—offered to come down and become man, and suffer a life of suffering and rebuke and die a horrid death of shame, and then—having reconciled his angry Father and redeemed the human race from Hell—ascended to his throne in Heaven until he judge mankind at the last day—this is a stupendous, tragic, and soul-stirring story. But it all rests on Miracle, and a long crescendo of Miracles. Eliminate the miracle and there is nothing stupendous or very tragic in it, that a young Jewish zealot was condemned to death

in a popular tumult. A noble end—alas! too common!

Thousands of devoted and virtuous reformers are constantly perishing in a way as cruel and as pathetic. We hear now daily of missionaries being savagely murdered in many parts of the world, and, without comparing them to Jesus, we cannot read history fairly without seeing that there have been many characters quite equal to his—if not superior. We are bound to place the life and death of Paul far higher than that of Jesus by reason of his grander intellect, his broader conception of reform, his nobler humanity, and his profounder moral insight. The life and death of Socrates was far more sane, wise, natural and humane than that of Jesus. He was quite as much a Saviour and Redeemer, and quite as much a noble ideal of self-sacrifice, with a far more trustworthy record and far less taint of imposture. So, too, was Confucius or Pythagoras. And if we require a mystical quietism in our religious type, that of Buddha is equal and in many things superior to that of Jesus. As men, as moralists, as religious heroes, I find such men as Epaminondas, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Gregory the Great, St. Bernard, King Alfred, and St. Louis far grander and more perfect types. And the history of *their* lives and teaching is certainly far more certain and clear. To take Jesus of Nazareth as the founder and type of Christianity is rank treason to the memory of Paul of Tarsus. And to take either of them as standing out utterly above and beyond all the founders and reform-

ers of religion, all the other Redeemers, Saviours, Prophets of the human race, is rank treason to the memory of some of the noblest men in ancient or in modern times to whom we owe all that is best in human life.

This utterly preposterous and irrational estimate of Jesus and the Gospel could not possibly have arisen whilst Jesus was taken to be a young Jewish enthusiast and the Gospel to be a residuum of mythical tradition. Treated as simple history of a remarkable but not at all superhuman youth, no such idea could have come into being. As the story of the Second Person of the Trinity as revealed by the Third Person, it naturally created a profound impression on the imagination. And now people who entirely reject the whole miraculous legend and the inspired character of the books, still cling to the halo of sublimity which belongs exclusively to the idea they reject. The old logicians used to say, "Take away the cause, and you destroy the effect." The *cause* of the ideal beauty of Jesus' character and the superiority of Christianity as a religion was certainly its miraculous form and its divine origin. And yet those who repudiate its miraculous form and its divine origin, still think to preserve the effect. The moral sublimity of Christ's life and death depended on—flowed from—his being the Second Person of the Trinity. Destroy that, and the moral sublimity is reduced to very ordinary human proportions.

Christianity owes all its moral and spiritual sublimity to the complex superhuman dogmas on which it rests.

Take away these superhuman doctrines and it is seen to be full of most misleading sentiment. Now so much has been said of the profound moral regeneration that was effected by the Christian Church and of the deep spiritual teaching of Paul, in this very course, that I shall not be misunderstood if I try to show what Christianity is *minus* its supernatural scheme and apparatus. I am not about to undervalue or disparage Christianity. I merely protest against everything being undervalued and disparaged for its sake. The Catholic Church I take to be a far more solid thing. And the Catholic Church or Catholic religion *minus* its doctrines and supernatural substructure is a great deal. But Christianity pure and simple is not. I suppose Christianity pure and simple, the essence of Christianity, is to be found, if anywhere, in the Sermon on the Mount. These transcendental hyperboles of Jesus about humility, patience, other-worldliness have a truly pathetic power, when they are supposed to be uttered by an Almighty God who descended from Heaven to teach them. But these "counsels of perfection" are not so perfect when simply uttered by a young moral enthusiast. And they have been practically dropped by the wisdom of the Church and by the noblest Christians.

Take them seriatim:—(1) "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Humility is a virtue, but Comte's parody is far higher—"Blessed are the rich in heart: for theirs is the Kingdom of Earth." Humility is good and beautiful, but Char-

ity is better. The first is vague mysticism; the second is noble and practical morality. (2) "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted"—mystical extravagance. (3) "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." That is sheer nonsense. They may inherit Heaven (we do not know), but not earth. The other beatitudes on the merciful, on the pure in heart, on the peacemakers, are beautiful and true. But Confucius, Buddha, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius said much the same, though not in a way so pathetic, so mystical, so passionate. Then comes that famous declaration as to the fulfilment of every jot and tittle of the Mosaic law—a thing which Paul and the Pauline Church utterly repudiated and cast aside. Then whosoever shall say, "Thou fool, shall be in danger of Hell-Fire." Jesus' interpretation of the law against adultery marks a great and notable moral advance. But it is immediately followed up by the injunction to pluck out the right eye and cut off the right hand. The injunction against swearing has been formally broken by all Christian countries, for the injunction is against *all* swearing, and is not limited to profane swearing. "Turn the other cheek to the smiter" is extravagance. It is not healthy morality at all, and no Christian treats it seriously but a fanatic. The injunctions as to Charity are fine, but quite hysterical and unreal. "Love your enemies." No man can *love* his enemies, and it would be moral weakness to pretend to do so. We forgive our enemies: remain unmoved. Such language used by

the Son of God, who had descended to soften men's fierce hearts, has a meaning and a justification. But in a young moralist, it is morbid and unreal. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect"—is impossible. How can the sinful and corrupt nature of man imitate divine goodness? If we come to look at the Lord's Prayer there is little in it that can be called moral elevation. And when we come to the hyperbolic injunctions to take no thought for the morrow or what we eat or drink, or what we shall put on, we have commands which no Christian follows, which it would be utterly immoral to follow, which are conceivable as the utterances of God, but which are ridiculous and inhuman in a man.

When we eliminate from the Gospel all that is utterly utopian and, humanly speaking, impracticable—all that is mere mysticism and quietism that would reduce us (if literally practised) to be hermits of the Thebaid or Simeon Stylites—and also eliminate everything miraculous, superhuman, and scientifically incredible—then the residuum is some very beautiful and touching lessons as to humility, charity, magnanimity, peaceableness, and the beauty of forgiveness and loving kindness; but it is not solid enough and workable enough to make a religion. All that is best and strongest in Christianity is historically a much later and plainly human construction, quite independent of the essence of the original Gospel, and often irreconcilable with the Sermon on the Mount. The entire scheme of Christian religion—



the imitation of Christ, being perfect as God is perfect, the union of the Human and the Divine, the sacrifice for sin, the washing away of our sins by Christ's mediation, the sacramental infusion of Christ's spirit in us, our being reconciled to God by Christ, our good actions being inspired by Christ, our seeing our Redeemer in Heaven hereafter—every part of what is called Christianity—implies and absolutely rests on the Divinity of Jesus, and his miraculous Incarnation and Ascension. Paul said truly, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

Christianity as a religion rests on the divinity of Christ. If there be no miracle there can be no divinity. If Jesus were not God, he is a rather feeble type to imitate, and an utterly vain reed to lean upon. If he be risen from the cross, it is a miracle. If he be not risen, he is not God; and if he be not God, "then is your faith vain." If Christ be a man like Socrates, put Socrates for Christ. Talk of the Imitation of Socrates; Socrates' sacrifice for our sins, our good actions being inspired by Socrates; Socrates being our Mediator, and receiving us into Heaven. What nonsense would be this Religion of Socrates! So Christianity without the supernatural is nonsense also.

Now in saying all this I am merely pointing out what inevitable logic requires—what rigid consistency of mind involves—and it is only addressed to those who deliberately think they can construct a systematic and permanent scheme of religion on the basis of the spiritual

essence of Christianity denuded of all miraculous and supernatural element in doctrine and all revelation by any sort of Paraclete in the Scriptures. To those who dream of such a type of religion in the future I say it is pure waste of effort, floundering in a sea of confusion and prevarication. The essence of the primitive Gospel as delivered by Jesus to the Jews is a perfectly hazy, thin, and hysterical affair when rigidly examined by modern philosophy and research. All that is great and permanent in Christianity has been built up by ordinary *men* without inspiration and without divine mission, ages after the death of Jesus on the Cross, and largely upon ideas and hopes which never entered his mind at all.

But I do not address this language to those who, inside the Churches or outside of them, are not troubled much by logic or consistency, who in a loose, vague way are trying to drop as much as they can of Christian dogma, to magnify the human side of Christ's nature, to glorify the essence of his teaching—the new Decalogue of Charity, forgiveness, mercy, and brotherhood—and who are trying to get a more rational conception of the Hebrew writings. Happily, perhaps, for all of us, logic and consistency play very small parts in the practical life of the majority of men and women—and of all things most in religion. And to the vast mass of the non-logical, non-consistent, Neo-Christians I can extend real sympathy and friendly encouragement. I come back to what I said at the outset, that, with all its intellectual want of logic and of consistence, Neo-Christian-

ity is an important element in the evolution of religion—one with which we must feel sympathy and alliance. Yes! Sympathy and alliance! It is a half-way house to us. It is permeating the whole mass of religious thought—outside the Catholic Church; but inside the other orthodox Churches and round them. We are much nearer to it than we are to dogmatic Atheism or bare secularism, or even to militant Agnosticism. It is a part of our religion and not contrary to our religion, and we seek to incorporate it. One of the most able and eloquent leaders of the Neo-Christian movement said to me years ago: “Your faith and mine come ultimately to much the same thing. You prefer to call your ideal Humanity, I prefer to call mine Christ.” Well, I think the ideal of Humanity is far wider, more real, more definite. Everywhere round us (again outside the Catholic Church) I see a sort of vague Neo-Christianity silently growing and working. And in a not very distant future—even as near as another century—we might see only three rival religious schemes—Catholicism, Neo-Christianity, Humanity. These answer to the three states: Theological, Metaphysical, Positive. Neo-Christianity is the Metaphysical transition between theologic fiction and Positive science. I see no Neo-Christianity in Catholicism, and that is why I called it the only substantive and permanent form of Christianity—not meaning by “permanent” eternal, but not evanescent.

But manifestly there is a growing Neo-Christianity

inside the Church of England, and all through the Orthodox Christian bodies. The new Unitarians—all except the high and dry old fossil School—are now frankly Neo-Christian. As I say, one cannot see how the official priesthood in the Church of England can accept it. And hence we may suppose that a large section of the Church of England will have to pass into Catholicism, as it is rapidly doing. But in a vague and unsystematic way Neo-Christianity is at work in the Church and in all orthodox Churches. The way in which it is done is this: Priests and orthodox ministers now make no overt attempt to assert any coherent new version of the dogmas, and forbear to criticise the Bible. They have been warned, and they give it up. What they do is to drop the dogma quietly, they ignore Hell-fire, are very vague about Heaven, magnify the Humanity of Christ, and discover in the Gospel of Christ all sorts of ideas that are historically long subsequent to Christ.

I recently received from a most learned and eloquent priest of the Episcopal Church a very interesting book, "The Brotherhood of Man," full of fine social teaching and spiritual and moral fervour. Much of it is really nothing less than the religion of Humanity. I do not say that there is anything unorthodox in this graceful book, anything which could be prosecuted by a Bishop in a Court. But it is largely infused with Neo-Christianity. It drops almost all dogma, except the double nature of the Man-God Christ; it magnifies the

Humanity and almost ignores (without at all denying) the Divinity of Christ; it attributes to Jesus quite modern ideas about human brotherhood. Now if there is one thing that never crossed the mind of the historic Jesus it is this. And by enlarging on certain beautiful maxims and thoughts of Jesus and dropping the rest, the author arrives at a vision of the ultimate Brotherhood of Man, irrespective of creed, by human love, not by the blood of Christ.

I have seen a good deal of comment from Orthodox Nonconformity on my views of Orthodox Dissent. Much of it is friendly remonstrance with me for suggesting that Orthodox Nonconformists have rigid dogmas at all, that they insist on Biblical creeds, and especially that they rely exclusively on a book, and incline to any view of verbal inspiration of the Bible. I find myself on all sides assured that this rigid view of revealed truth is giving way. I have received a friendly and most interesting letter from a learned teacher in an official position amongst the Friends or Quakers, assuring me that they quite abandon literal and verbal inspiration, and welcome the newer and "higher criticism" of the Bible. Well, I am very glad to acknowledge all this. Of course, I was speaking very broadly of Orthodox Dissent, as historically known to the world, and I think I did it no injustice in saying that it was based on "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." We now see that Orthodox Dissent is very prone to accept degrees in importance, value, authenticity of the

books of Scripture, and is allowing much of the conventional dogmas to fall into obscurity. I read in the very able and authoritative organ of Orthodox Nonconformity: "The tendency amongst orthodox dissenters is to found their religion less and less upon a book but more and more upon a *Man*. They must make free use of modern criticism, and after all there remains the *secret charm* of the Gospel." Well! but that is the germ of Neo-Christianity. Neo-Christianity means magnifying the Man Jesus, insisting on his humanity and his human character—accepting modern criticism of the Bible—and resting on the *secret charm* of the Gospel, without literal belief in the whole Bible. That is not Orthodox Dissent, but is Unorthodox Dissent—it is Neo-Christianity.

The religion of Humanity accepts, adopts, incorporates the Humanity of Jesus, the pathetic beauty of his character; it accepts the secret charm of the Gospel, rejecting its extravagances and absurdities and reverently using modern criticism to disentangle the chaff from the grain. We Positivists, too, in a sense, can go heartily with the Neo-Christian movement.

All that we ask is that it be quite honest, courageous, thorough, and scientific. All that we ask is—not to found religion on any *one man*, and why on that one *man*—but on all truly great and good men. Why found it on the man Jesus rather than the man Paul,

or on the man Confucius, or the man Buddha, or the man Moses, or Socrates, or Augustine, or Dante, or Hume, or Comte? Why make so much of the secret charm of the Gospel, and nothing of the secret charm of Paul's "Letters," or Confucius' "Moral Aphorisms," or the secret charm of Plato, of Milton, of Shelley, or Goethe? There have been thousands of redeemers, saviours, mediators of mankind, none of them perfect, none quite wise; thousands of gospels, none of them perfect, none of them with more than glimpses and flashes of eternal truth.

The Philosophy of Humanity on a basis of encyclopædic science, crowned by the science of society and the science of human nature, explains, inspires and harmonises all these gospels. The religion of Humanity accepts, reverences, and adds new glory to all these redeemers, saviours, and mediators. It puts in his true place the young Jewish reformer and revolutionist, with his lyrical passion of tenderness. It puts in his true place the far grander apostle who followed, one whose shoe-latchet the young Galilean was not worthy to unloose—the heroic Paul, with his profound insight into the human soul, and his new and sublime vision of the final Brotherhood of Man.

## CHAPTER XII

### THEISM

#### I

IN this series of essays on the leading types of Theological Religion I have not been criticising any one of these types from any *absolute* point of view or on their *intellectual* basis, but solely on their effects as influencing *Morality* and *Society*: not dealing with their truth but with their usefulness as promoting a good life and sound moral and social union. All of them have their good effects. And if I have dwelt at all on their evil effects, it has been to show that the Religion of Humanity, adopting and incorporating their valuable side, avoids their bad effects.

If there is one thing which Positivists have steadily kept in view, it is that it is the essence of Positivism to represent a positivist *faith*—not a negative *criticism*. We never disturb beliefs or insinuate doubts. We never assail Christian creeds or depreciate the Bible; much less do we present scepticism, Atheism, or even Agnosticism as an adequate resting place in the great problems of Religion and Philosophy. We want to enlarge and animate the spiritual nature. But as our aim is and must be to arrive at solid realities, we must be free to examine what is only a hollow and delusive reality.

Monotheism is altogether a shrinkage from Polytheism. Any single Deity in the Heaven or in Space is to



the ordinary man a being less present and active than the thousand and one divinities of Polytheism who dwelt in every hill, river, tree, city, and house, and took part in every act of life, however trivial or material. Protestantism is a shrinkage from Catholicism with its thousands of saints, ceremonies, local worships, and varied ritual. Neo-Christianity, recognising the Spirit of the Gospel, and rejecting the portentous and miraculous scheme of Salvation, along with the creeds, ritual, and organisations of Christian Churches, is a shrinkage from Protestantism. And Theism, entirely discarding the Gospel and Christian dispensation with its Man-God and even the Legend of Pity and human sympathy—is an emphatic case of shrinkage in religious sentiment—reducing it to contemplation of a single sublime and utterly incomprehensible Omnipotence, as to whose relations to individual Man, in the absence of anything like revelation, we are left to conjecture.

Theology, shrunk to the proportions of simple Theism, is a scheme of thought so bare, so transcendental, and so alien to human interests and sympathy, that it does not offer the basis for a religion definite and human enough to effect great moral and social action for masses of men. Again, in the absence of any revelation, or possible agreement as to the attributes, purposes, and relations with this transcendental Omnipotence, Theism means and enjoins anything which each individual believer thinks it ought to mean and might enjoin. Theism, in its fear of being *anthropomorphic*,

and of descending to the earthly sphere, is so purely and intensely *theo-morphic* that it fails to reach man's interest at all, and will not descend to deal with Man, and hence becomes a mode of Metaphysics, practically not differing much from a recognition of the *Unknowable*.

Most certainly I have no intention whatever of presenting any attempted refutation of Theism as a dogmatic belief. Anything of the kind is the height of absurdity as well as a piece of pedantic cynicism. Positivism is not Atheism. It holds the denial of the creation of the Universe by Omnipotence to be an idle and even mischievous sophism. "Atheists" (said Comte) "are the most irrational of all Theologians." They affect to solve the mystery of Creation by the most improbable and least edifying of all the solutions of a hopeless dilemma. If we must choose a solution, that of Omnipotence is a less unintelligible hypothesis than that of Self-creation or Chance. And as the hypothesis of Omnipotence has led to great moral and social effects in the world, whilst bare Materialism and Atheism have led to egoism, conceit and hardness, Atheism presents itself to us as positively repulsive as well as rank sophistry.

It is only the superficial hearer of Positivism who could think this language hard to reconcile, or who would expect me after such words to declare myself an ardent Theist. I am honestly and frankly neither Theist nor Atheist. I have no means of dealing with the mystery of Creation one way or the other. I admit

that the question is one of transcendent importance. But there are a thousand questions of transcendent importance about which I have no opinion. What is going to happen to the British Empire or to England in the next century or to any one of us in the coming year? I wish I knew. I can guess. But what is the use of guessing? We have such very urgent things to attend to, that we had better give up wasting our lives in *guessing*. Positivism is entirely absorbed in things of this earth—not of the Universe, and it is more important to us to know how this twentieth century is going to end, than to know how the Universe began. The first concerns our moral and social duties. The second is mere idle curiosity.

The religion of Humanity belongs to a wholly different sphere from Theism. It neither accepts nor disputes the solution of Natural Theology. It insists that the normal object of religious reverence lies in a wholly different sphere—not in the Incomprehensible, but in the Comprehensible; not in the Universe, but in this planet; not in the Absolute, but in the Relative; not in the supernatural, but in the natural; not in the Divine, but in the Human World. The human, the earthly, the relative are far more to us than the Absolute, the Infinite, the Celestial. We know and understand and can use the former: we know nothing of the latter.

Those whose minds are fortified with an habitual sense of the *relative* nature of all knowledge only feel a lan-

guid and distant interest in metaphysical conundrums. Healthy, human, social work in the world leaves us neither time nor desire for speculative dilemmas about the superhuman.

Theism, by its very nature, is essentially an elastic, variable form of belief, which in the past and to-day takes many shapes. The old Deism of the eighteenth century, with its dogmatic proof of the Creator and its logical narrowness, has not much following to-day. But there is a great deal of vague Theism, a sentimental or metaphysical type of Natural Theology which assumes a divine circumambient Something as an ultimate but otiose object of reverence, and the primary but quite unintelligible source of man's life and being. This is a very common phase of belief with highly cultivated minds. I have not the least intention of disputing this state of mind or offering any objections to it. It really differs very little from Agnosticism. A vague circumambient or recondite Power, of which we know nothing, except by inference and analogy, and about which we can know nothing except by hypothesis, is a Power so vague and so transcendental that it does not fall within the sphere of our present purpose. What can be the social and moral reaction of a religious belief in a "sort of something" that lies behind all knowledge? A kind of *Primum Mobile*, First Cause, or *Ens Entium* may be a Metaphysical Postulate, an instinctive intuition or an Ultimate Axiom of human thought (I am

not denying this); but it is not the basis of a religion able to transform society and inspire morality. It would be like trying to make a religion out of Time and Space. Hence, without at all disputing the logical ground for such a hypothesis we need not consider it as that kind of Theism which can have any serious reaction at all upon human morality or society. That "great first cause, least understood," according to the poet, which is equally "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord," "adored by Saint, by Savage, and by Sage"—is too indefinite to be the basis of any serious religion.

For my present purpose there is no need to consider any Theism of this kind. How far it differs from mere Agnosticism—which declines to dogmatise about any Ultimate Power without denying its existence or from Matthew Arnold's "stream of tendency that makes for righteousness"—or from Herbert Spencer's Unknowable—or from the French philosopher's *Grand Peut-Etre*—this, I say, is a question of Metaphysics on which I do not enter. All that we are now concerned with is this—that no Theism so loose, intangible, and absolutely mysterious can be the active basis of a moral and social regeneration, such as alone we can call a Religion. But there is still with us a dogmatic, proselytising, working phase of Theism of a much harder and more practical kind having its own places of worship, ritual, ministers, and so forth, and claiming to be a Church with a creed, and a scheme of salvation. That is the Theism I now propose to consider.

This dogmatic Theism claims to have a creed, I say, and not only a creed, but a demonstrated creed. I have lately seen a work with the title "Theism as a Science," which opens with the tremendous proposition that "Theism, or Natural Theology, is the Science of God." Now, I am not about to controvert this startling proposition, for two reasons. First, if I do, in spite of anything I could say, some persons would assume that my argument—"there is no science of God"—was equivalent to the assertion, "there is no God." This assertion (I repeat over and over again) I do not make, and I do not believe. My second reason for not controverting it is this, that, for my present purpose, I am quite willing to assume the Science of God to be real demonstration, that Natural Theology is real knowledge of solid truth. My argument is that supposing it to be certain, it is not clear enough, big enough, whereon to found a moral and social religion.

Though I will not utter one word in disproof of the "Science of God"—a science apart from Revelation and superior to Revelation, apart also from Analogy and Probability, and apart even from emotion and instinctive feeling—I must point out that the claim for a "Science of God" is quite new and strange in the higher thought of our age. In the eighteenth century there was a narrow, shallow, dogmatic Deism which fancied it could *prove* the existence, attributes, and nature, and even will of the Almighty Creator of the Universe, but in this century the most ardent Theologians and the

most learned Divines have quite given up this crude logic. Since Kant has been made familiar in this country by Hamilton, Mill, Mansel, and Spencer, after the recognition of all that is meant by the *Relativity of Knowledge*, no philosophic mind of first, second, or third rank has ever ventured to talk about a syllogistic proof of the nature of an Absolute, Eternal, Unconditioned Almighty Creator of the Universe.

The stale platitudes of Paley about Design, and the watch and the watchmaker, have fallen into contempt and oblivion, as sophisms too feeble to need exposure. Theologians have argued from feeling, intuition, moral necessity, analogy, probability, and so forth, but have long abandoned the idea of a logical proof of the *Absolute* by the *Relative*. It has been the boast of Theologians that the Absolute is incomprehensible by the Relative, the Infinite by the Finite, the Eternal by the temporary. Dean Mansel's great argument has never been shaken—that the relativity of human knowledge so completely precludes man from knowing the Absolute that our conceptions of God and his being must be sought for in other fields than in scientific evidence. Matthew Arnold, when arguing for the permanence of Christianity and the indestructible revelation in the Bible, declares “that there is not even a low degree of probability for the assertion that God is a person who thinks and loves,” and, accordingly, he rests Religion on *feeling*. And Mr. Arthur J. Balfour, who in any case is a theologian well equipped in the conclusions of current philosophy,

and not particularly afraid of a bold "begging of the question," does not even notice the possibility of proving by Logic the scientific knowledge of the Creator and his will; he falls back on various forms of the emotional, moral, and probability argument, and ultimately comes to this: (1) That dogmatic Atheism cannot be proved (so say we all), and (2) that the Ultimate certainties of science become at last so mysterious, transcendental, and improbable that the Ultimate certainties of Natural Theology are (perhaps) not more mysterious, transcendental, and improbable. Mr. Balfour does not seem to differ much from Matthew Arnold, that, from the point of view of *science*, though there may be only a low probability for the existence of an Infinite and Absolute Person who loves and thinks, still, there is only a low probability for any ultimate conclusion of science.

Though I am not about to engage in any disproof of a Science of God, I must, in passing, say that such a science is wholly unknown and unrecognised in any competent modern philosophy, and the grounds on which I have seen it alleged are quite unworthy of serious discussion. I have seen it gravely argued that when we see a tree growing that is scientific proof that the Universe was created by an Almighty Person who thinks and loves. An African savage has more sound philosophy when he says that the Tree itself must be a powerful and a benevolent Being. Certainly, the mere existence and life of a multiform world around us is quite as trustworthy scientific proof of Fetichism, as-



trolatry, or Polytheism, as of Theism. But I must decline to argue with a theory which does not show even an elementary knowledge of modern philosophy or scientific logic. My purpose is quite different. I propose to assume it to be all true and proven.

My argument is that, given all this "Science of God" to be demonstrated, you are really no further on towards a true moral and social religion. This Natural Theology claims to be wholly independent of Revelation. It is on a far higher and stronger plane than Revelation, and cannot derive any strength from Revelation. It is, of course, more than independent of Christianity; indeed, it is hostile to it, for the Incarnation of Christ is a derogation from Theism. It discards miracles and all miraculous intervention. There is nothing but the Existence of One Absolute, Eternal, Almighty Creator of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, whose purpose is to bring us and all created things to their ordained ends. The Gospel, the Man-God, Christ, the tale of Incarnation and Ascension, the Miracles, Atonement, the Churches, the Creeds, the rituals of all Christian Communion must be cast aside as idle and mischievous fables. There is but one God, and good and wise men are his Prophets.

This dogmatic Theism is thus entirely dependent on what the good and wise Prophet chooses to reveal out of his inner consciousness. It is not a question of human Ethics or Sociology. It is the human reason apprehending the Divine Mind. It does not rest on

Science—other than the Science of God. It does not rest on Revelation, or signs and wonders, or tradition, or any Church or body of saints. Man is left in direct presence of One Absolute, Infinite Omnipotence, immediately manifested to the reason from which alone can his will be gathered. But such a conception of God is just as completely *anthropomorphic* as is that of any rude, idolatrous savage. He imagines his God to be a fierce warrior like himself: just so the Theist imagines his God to be what he thinks great and good. It is more than anthropomorphic—it is *idiomorphic*. God is made in the likeness of each individual Theist. Ideals differ, and hence the ideal God of every individual differs from the Ideal God of every other individual.

It has been pointed out a thousand times that, if we are left to the argument of *Design* and kindred logical grounds to prove the nature of the Creator, the argument lands us in the dilemma that the world is as full of waste, destruction, failure, incoherence, misdirected force, ill-devised contrivance, as it is of benevolent and successful purpose. The whole material and living world wages one ceaseless struggle in which infinite millions of living things are destroyed each instant amid infinite torture, infinite waste, and infinite confusion. If there be a God of Creation there seems to be another God of Destruction. The universe seems to be an eternal war of infinite angelic or divine and demoniac or Satanic forces. A kind of Dualism between Ahrimanes and Oromasdes, with infinite subordinates on both sides,

seems the more logical issue of contemplating the world—an internecine warfare that never comes to any issue, never can end, and is nearly equally balanced. The Theist has to admit that God the Creator is also God the Destroyer.

It is not merely that the world is a chaos of destruction, but modern science has shown us plain evidence of purpose baffled, distorted, of blundering, of ill contrivance, of wanton misuse of power in every corner and aspect of the organic world. The eye is an organ ill contrived for its purpose, and full of bad work. So is almost every other organ of the human body and every other body. Rudimentary organs, useless and atrophied organs, obstinate persistence of a given type in totally different purposes, *e.g.*, seven vertebræ alike in the neck of the giraffe, the camel, the whale, and the mouse—caudal vertebræ in the cat and also in man, useless legs concealed in the seal, and useless teeth in many animals—all these anomalies are intelligible enough on the theory of gradual evolution and adaptation to environment. But in the theory of Creation they are only evidence of clumsiness, bad contrivance, or change of purpose.

Clumsiness, waste, indecision are unhappily by no means the worst defects revealed to us by the spectacle of the world as we now know it. Torture, disease, death, sin, crime, and base wickedness meet us at every turn. It is needless to enlarge on the melancholy catalogue. It confronts us with the eternal dilemma be-

tween the Almighty Power and the Infinite Goodness of the Creator. Could Almighty Power endure that anything should be suffered to mar his work? Could infinite goodness and purpose design such horrors, create such evil, contemplate it and see that it is Good? To all this Theism has one ready answer: "How do you know that torture is an evil, why are you so sure that pain is a bad thing? Is death a real loss to a living thing? How can there be any morality, unless man is free to be immoral? How can you, feeble, purblind creature, be sure that what you call evil is not good in God's eyes? Perhaps, in his infinite wisdom, everything that is is for the best; and in an Absolute world pain, death, waste, sin, crime, and vice are means of grace in the eyes of Absolute Goodness."

Perhaps they are. But see the consequences of such a theology. Suppose a fanatical Softa or Mollah questioned by a Christian as to the horrible massacres, tortures and atrocities perpetrated by Kurds and Turks on Armenian Christians, and asked if he really believes that Allah can be pleased with such things. "We are true Theists," cries the Mollah, "and not followers of a mawkish Giaour youth. How can you tell that the One God in Heaven is to be measured by your European standard? He is a god of battles and of the true Believers, and he rejoices to see Islam triumphant amid the torture, death, rape, and arson of any number of Giaours." Every savage people believes that God is refreshed by blood. We were once at war with Ashanti,

partly, it seems, because the king would not abandon his ancestral custom of human sacrifices. "How can you tell," he might have said, "that Mumbo Jumbo is not pleased by victims—all gods are pleased? It is a higher law than that of some European Mrs. Grundy or Mr. Podsnap. Our god is a god of war, and we worship him as men of war do."

The whole of ancient history is one long record of how savage races invented a god after their own image and honoured him with rites bloody, grotesque, or obscene. Samuel taught the Jews how to hew Agag in pieces before the Lord, just like a Mussulman Mollah to-day, and how to exterminate the possessors of the land of Judea. The people of Syria and Babylon practised Paphian abominations in honour of their god. The Philistines had Baal and Moloch, to whom atrocities were pleasant, and to whom they offered up their children as burnt sacrifices. All of them having got a firm idea in their minds of what was the taste of the True God, would have answered all objections urged by human morality: "How do you know that torture, death, and destruction are not delightful in the eyes of God?"

So soon as any race have erected in their minds an image of supreme godhead which they imagine to be independent of morality and superior to mere human morality and other human reasoning, then their religion uproots all moral sense, their good instincts, and perhaps actively incites them to cruelty, folly and atrocity. There are at this moment millions of Mussulmans who

believe it to be an act of religion to kill unbelievers. The Yezidis worship the Devil. The Thugs of India think their deity enjoins them to commit secret murder. Our Theist neighbours in England have not got so far as that. The law and the pressure of public opinion cause them to have a higher and purer conception of Almighty God. But once admit that Almighty God is not to be measured by our mere human standard of morality, that pain, death, sin, wickedness, and waste may have a good purpose in his eyes, and conduce to his eternal decrees, and there is literally no surety for morality at all. You may come to worship a devil.

## THEISM

### II

I HAVE assumed, for the purposes of argument, that there is a real Science of God, apart from revelation, analogy, or feeling. Suppose we can *prove* by logic that the Universe was created by an Almighty, Infinite, Absolute Being, for no rational Theist can admit that the Creator has any co-equal or antagonist or is less than Almighty, nor that he is Finite, or limited in time, space, wisdom, or force, nor that he is subject to conditions as man is, or has any relative aspect. Whatever is subject to conditions or related to anything outside of itself is limited and finite—not infinite. Let us assume that these propositions are not only thinkable, but are true—not only true, but demonstrable. The

next step of the Theist cosmogony is to prove that this Almighty Creator is benevolent, good, and loving. Let us grant this, also remembering that it is a benevolence, a love that admits of incalculable and hideous torments, death, ruin, chaos, and misery—all for our good.

A very devout nation of earnest Theists uttered hymns of triumph to their tribal God as a God of Battles—of vengeance. “Lo, thine enemies shall perish.” “Let them be put to shame and perish, that men may know that thou art the Most High,” etc., etc. The modern Theist is not at all bound by the ravings of the Jewish Minstrels. But he is bound by this, that the image of the Almighty Creator is one of stern, inexorable justice, and of a love which chastens with terrific and incessant power. Dante saw graven on the Portals of Hell that “This entrance to everlasting torment had been made by Divine Justice and Primal Love.” The modern Theist acknowledges “the perfect severity of justice towards sin.” To put the suffering and penalty on another, as is done in the Christian theory of Atonement and the Blood of Christ, is, to the Theist, a profanation and miscarriage of justice. Each sinner must bear it all himself. To share it would thwart the purposes of God.

There is one further article in the creed of Scientific Theism which is proved by the same logic as the existence of the Creator. This is a future state, and necessarily a future state of rewards and punishments. The sufferings of the innocent in this world are so manifest

and so manifold, and so is the triumph of the wicked, that we are forced to believe that if life or earth is ordered by a just and good God at all, death cannot be the end of it for good and bad alike; but there must be a life of retribution and of restitution, rewards and punishments, in a spiritual life hereafter. Theism says (and can say) little about Heaven and less about Hell. It would be monstrous to imagine a Heaven (without a Hell) for all alike. But *some* Heaven, *some* Hell—or future states of happiness and sorrow—do seem a reasonable issue of a just and almighty Ruler of the World. I shall not dispute this. And if we grant a Science of God, we may grant a Science of Heaven and Hell.

Here we come to the farthest limit of what Rational Theology or Scientific Theism can produce. This is the whole of what it can offer as a creed, or what it claims to offer: (1) The creation of the Universe by an Almighty Being; (2) a Being, infinite in Power, Wisdom and Goodness; (3) the ordering of this world material and moral by this All-wise and All-good Providence; (4) a future state, in which virtue will be perfected and vice shall be punished. This is the whole creed. For purposes of argument I now assume that every one of these propositions has been demonstrated by strict logic. Be it so. I say that this does not amount to a religion—in the sense of religion as a system of beliefs, of worship, and of conduct, able to control human nature and modify society. It amounts to a religious philosophy, no doubt. But the religion has



got to come; it has to be built up on this philosophy. I quite admit that religion can be built up on it. Let us watch the process.

The devout Theist finds himself a fleeting thing of a day on a planetary speck in an Infinite Universe, in presence of the Incomprehensible Creator of it, and he sees that this goodness, justice, and love permit incessant and horrible waste, strife, and sin. The more he seeks to realise the sublimity of this Infinite Majesty the more he realises the infinite gulf which separates him from such a Being. The more he asks his own conscience to look into the blackness of his own corrupt nature, the more he is overwhelmed with the sense of his own unworthiness and the just retribution that awaits him at the hands of an All-perfect God. He devoutly believes that his Maker is good, merciful, and loving, but with a mercy and a love that has made a Hell and a Judgment, and is a Being of "perfect severity towards sin." He hopes for something like a Heaven, and trusts he may escape whatever there be of Hell. But the prospect of appearing at that dread Bar of Judgment, with neither Redeemer, Saint, nor Advocate to sustain him, with no intercession, no sacrifice to plead, is a terrific prospect. He feels like Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress* when he cried out: Who shall deliver me from the wrath to come? Now, he is not a Christian, but a Theist. He repudiates Christ, Saints, Virgin, and Angels, and all the legends and the sacraments of all the Churches.

He stands alone before his offended God—waiting for strict justice, prepared to meet his fate. I am not about to deny that the thought is one of tremendous power that must rouse and inspire some natures with desperate energy. The strong, resolute, proud nature, with hard brain and untamed self-confidence, may go to this dread ordeal with magnificent heroism. There have been such natures: but are all men, all women, all the timid and the weak ones able to bear such a strain? I do not deny that some men can be raised to heroic mood by such a religion as this Theism. But I say the majority would be crushed and appalled by it. It is the religion of the strong, the independent, the masterful. It would be the purgatory of the feeble, the irresolute, the clinging natures.

Whatever be the religion built up on this Theistic basis, it would be a religion that each believer, each congregation, would fashion for themselves. There would be neither book, nor tradition, nor revelation, nor Church—no, nor scientific philosophy, nor dogmatic ethics, nor sociology, to guide them. Each believer, each congregation, each preacher, would build up such a scheme of religion as seemed good out of their own moral consciousness—out of their ideals of right and wrong, of God and man, whatever these might be. Since they would have only three or four bare propositions in fundamental philosophy to go upon, and as there may be in practical ethics a thousand ways in which these might be interpreted, the practical religion would

be just what each believer chose to make it for himself. The hard, proud man would make it a stern, masterful religion of blood and iron. The sentimental man would make it a religion of spiritual extravagance. The cruel man would make it a religion of harshness. The hypocrite would make it a religion of self-righteousness. Grant that it might even ennoble the noble nature; it would intensify the evil nature. To stand alone before an Absolute Almighty Being, whose attributes, nature, will, and purposes you are compelled (in the absence of all clear authority) to imagine for yourself, is really to imagine only an infinite and transcendent Force, made in your own image—a preternaturally magnified Self.

There have been, there are, natures whom this religion of Theism clothes with power, hope, and joy. A truly grand spirit may be enlarged by it. Byron was such a Theist; it was the religion of *Manfred* and *Cain*. That was the imaginative form of Theism. Rousseau was such a Theist; his was the sentimental form of Theism. Carlyle was such a Theist; at least in his youth—say, in his *Heroes*. That is the heroic form of Theology. Mazzini was such a Theist. His was the social and democratic form of Theism. “God and the People” was his motto; and it meant anything that Mazzini thought right and good. His conception of moral duty was noble. His conception of political duty was revolutionary and chaotic. But what sort of religion would be a Theism compounded of the ideas of Byron

and Rousseau, of Carlyle and of Mazzini? The God of the Theist is an instrument for intensifying the ideal of the individual Theist.

It has often taken noble forms, as with the first of the two Isaiahs (Chapter I), and it has taken blood-thirsty forms, as in Ezekiel. And our own Fifth Monarchy men were practically Theists, often men of rare heroism. The most familiar type of the Theist is the Asiatic Mussulman, with whom Theism in a rude and fierce race has taken the form of conquest and domination. But our fierce Commonwealth fanatics and the ruthless fanatics of Islam have behind them the Hebrew Scriptures or the Koran, the types of Samuel or Mahomet. Our modern Theists have behind them the Sermon on the Mount, the life and teaching of Christ and his Apostles. They repudiate their authority, but they unconsciously follow that teaching. Thus Theism as a basis of religion may issue in anything. The practical religion, the moral and social precepts, have to be built up. The divine ideal intensifies the human ideal.

The power of Christianity to console the miserable, to comfort the bereaved, to inspire tenderness, humility, self-sacrifice, flows from the pathetic story of the Gospel, and the ideal of a Crucified Saviour and his final Ascension to plead for sinners in Heaven and mercifully to judge and to welcome them to his Father's place at the Last Day. And along with this ideal come all the touching and beautiful lessons of ecstatic and super-human lovingness, all the complicated scheme of Christ-

ian salvation and purification, the sacraments, ritual, discipline, and tradition of the Churches. Therein is the secret of Christianity. In that sense Matthew Arnold, who ridiculed miracles, who ridiculed the idea of proving God to be a person who thinks and loves, declared that Christianity would survive. In that sense we also can say that Christianity will survive as a historic and moral creation of Humanity. It will survive because it is anthropomorphic. All religion must be anthropomorphic or it will have no power over the human heart. Dogmatic Theism seeks to weed out Anthropomorphism from Religion.

My aim is *positive*—not *negative*. I could not consistently speak of any religious system without pointing out its weak side. But I have spoken of no system—not even of modern Neo-Christianity and Theism—without amply acknowledging their strong and fruitful sides. But my object has been throughout to lead up to the Religion of Humanity, and to show how it fulfils all the requisites of a moral and social religion that any other system professes to attain. Whilst every new phase of the religious revelation of the last 2,000 years presents a shrinkage until we end in the bare, narrow proposition of a dogmatic Theism, the idea of Humanity offers an unbounded field for the extension and amplification of religion, and that whilst giving it a truly and honestly scientific basis. The claim of dogmatic Theism to be such a basis is too narrow, too vague, too transcendental to admit of a scientific morality and

sociology to be tacked on to it. They are not in *pari materia*—not homogeneous. And even if they were, the scientific proof of Theism is abandoned as untenable by all competent minds which have been trained in modern philosophy.

There is, we know, a moral, sentimental, social, and practical presumption in favour of a Providence—of the ultimate triumph of goodness, of the sense of comfort, guidance, and inspiration given by such a Providence to each individual. There is a real craving in men for a Providence, for worship, for a creed, a scheme of Salvation, for a Church. We would be the last to deny that. “Man,” Theists say, “has an ineradicable sense of the supreme nobleness of morality, justice, and goodness.” We perfectly admit it, and we find its justification in the long battle of Humanity to rise to a higher civilisation. “The individual,” they say, “calls out for a moral and sympathetic power greater than himself.” Quite true. It is beside him in the Power of Humanity.

Theology, *per se*, in its essence is a postulate of philosophy, a presumption, a possibility so vague that it is hard to grasp it. But Humanity is an unmistakable reality. Nobody doubts or can doubt it. One may say he imagines or believes in something grander in the Universe. But in the domain of experience, science, reality on earth, there can be no shadow of doubt as to the existence and greatness of Humanity. There is no possible breach nor contrast between *our* Science and

*our* Religion. Both are phases of one and the same reality. We have not to strain our minds to conceive how Divine Justice and Mercy are to be reconciled with a creation of Death, confusion, and waste. We have not to construct an endless tissue of apology and explanation for the mysterious ways of Providence, and for the suspension of the laws which we know to reign throughout Nature. We say frankly: "Humanity finds itself in a world for the defects of which it is not answerable, which it can largely come to know, and partly to improve, rising to higher things generation after generation, helping each one of us to rise to better things till we each become, in the rest of death, part of that very Providence which nourishes the infant, strengthens and informs the man, and lays our weary bones to rest in tender memory of whatever good we may have left to our fellow beings who will follow us on earth."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

THE second volume of the "Positive Polity" contains an analysis of the elements of Religion—of the nature and field of Religion—more exhaustive and searching than anything that has ever been said of Religion in ancient or in modern times.

Hence the profound interest of theologians in Comte's scheme. Both Catholic and Protestant divines have studied this abstract theory of Religion intently; and, with all the horror they feel for a Religion without a Theology, they recognise how deeply Auguste Comte has seen to the foundations of all religion, has apprehended what religion *really has to do*. And this explains the fascination that Comte possesses for some of the most sincere thinkers in many theological creeds. They find a modern man of science claiming for Religion a sphere of work far wider and more continuous than was ever claimed for it by St. Augustine or St. Bernard, Bossuet or Fénelon, by Calvin or Wesley—claiming for it an authority over the *thoughts and life* of men which the most passionate Christian has long ceased even to imagine in his dreams.

And what, on the other hand, says an avowed free-thinker like Mr. Mill, one who has himself criticised Comte unsparingly? He entirely justifies Comte in



his use of the term **Religion**, and his analysis of its sphere and nature; and he adds, "not only had he realised the essential conditions of **Religion**, but all other religions are made better in proportion as, in their practical result, they are brought to coincide with that which he aimed at constructing."

And so, as we so often hear, the familiar objection to Positivism is, that it implies too high a standard of human nature, is too good for practical work. Well! unless we *have* a high Ideal, a very high Ideal, we are never likely to do much.

I come, then, to show what this analysis of **Religion** by Comte is, and how it is applied to real life.

**Religion** is the state of harmony that results when man's entire life, both as an individual and as a member of society, corresponds with the real conditions—first of human nature; and secondly of the world around us.

This is a rather abstract way of putting it; but it can be shown that all systems of religion aim in spirit at this: the ordering human life in a true way, so as to make it accord with man's own nature and the facts of the Universe.

Theologians all say—Do the will of the Almighty, Omniscient Creator and you will have *peace*.

Just as Confucian Feticism said: Follow the mean, the just, the even course of correct conduct, and Heaven (the Sky) will give you peace.

Just as Bouddhism said: Get rid of all the passions which disturb and distract the Spirit, and you will find

ultimate rest in complete freedom from all lower cares.

So Positivism, giving precision to the vague fancies about Creation, Heaven, and Nirvana, says: Make life correspond with the real conditions of *human* nature and of *external* nature—and then harmony, happiness, peace result.

Peace, rest, harmony, the healthy working of the human organism, is the end of all modes of Religion. Religion is simply a state of *general harmony*, within and without—in the inmost spirit, between man and his fellows, between man and the Earth.

How idle, therefore, are debates whether Religion is a needful thing, a good thing, a thing that wise men in the future perhaps will not trouble about. Not to trouble about Religion is to be indifferent whether human life is in harmony with its true nature and real conditions—not to care whether we are at war with our own selves and our fellow beings, and our physical conditions—which is the state of a savage, and the lawless wild man.

But all the efforts of reasonable men, all philosophy, all science, all social energy, all our attempts to improve civilisation, all that we call progress—simply aim at making human life more in harmony with its *true* nature and its *real* conditions.

This is the meaning of Auguste Comte's profound aphorism: "Man grows more and more religious." In spite of appearances and of our habit of thinking that religion implies fiction and detachment from earth and

life, Man does grow more and more in harmony with his own nature and human nature, and so he does grow more religious. Hence Religion simply means development on the true lines of the real facts—in other words, Progress on the basis of Order.

This capacity for religious unity and union is essentially a human thing, and a social attribute. A steam engine or a ship shows a very remarkable unity of system, and of fitness for its work—but, of course, religion cannot be ascribed to either, beautifully systematic as both are; because they have no development, no continuous adjustment of their powers to their function—and if the engine breaks a wheel or a pipe or the ship starts a leak, there is an end of them, they cannot repair themselves, or remedy the smallest defect.

Nor have animals this possibility of religion. A dog or an elephant has some germs of it for a moment, because both try to adapt their lives to their real conditions, and order their natures round their own proper Providence, as we have seen in many a beautiful instance. But the elephant and the dog have simply germs of moral nature, and none of a social. But a tiger, or a shark, a vulture, and a rattlesnake (even if they had the brain of Dante and Shakespeare) could have no real religion—because their nature is not set towards harmony, towards fellowship, or to a loving acceptance of the real conditions of their life. To live lonely, to live in a ceaseless round of combat and torpor, to kill and be killed, is their only possible kind of life,

and the true development of a tiger is to become more and more terrible, and lonely, and destructive—though this very life of passion and storm hastens on his own death.

A short life and a stormy one is the motto of the tiger, and so it is of the human tiger and the human rattlesnake—for the life of selfish self-indulgence necessarily, in a social world, closes in the field against itself. These Napoleons of selfishness soon rouse against them a stronger combination which ultimately prison them in some St. Helena, as social pariahs.

The glorious peculiarity of Man amongst all living things is this: *He unites in himself all these tendencies:—*

1. That the development of his own nature coincides with the development of the nature of his fellow men.

2. That co-operation with his fellows is the true development of his own nature.

3. That the joint development of the individual and the race coincides with the true adaptation of man in the world.

4. That the continuity of life possessed by the race multiplies the life of the individual indefinitely.

Hence material, intellectual, and moral Progress all coincide, and tend to the same result when they are in harmony.

Again, individual development and social development alike coincide, and mutually strengthen each other.

Again, the highest activity is equivalent to perfect peace.

Further, the most complete unselfishness is the true way to the highest peace.

In other words, happiness and duty are synonymous, and, relatively, in the long run, prosperity and virtue are synonymous.

All alike mean, Life for Humanity.

Life for Humanity is at once:—

1. The grandest field for the intellect.
2. The most practical sphere for the energies, and
3. The purest satisfaction of the feelings.

It is also the surest mode in which man adjusts himself to the physical pressure of external Nature.

And it is the only way in which he can prolong his life beyond the few years of his own precarious existence.

Herein, then, are realised all the dreams of the older faiths, in which the instinctive genius of mankind groped after the Truth in ways so strange and diverse.

They have all struggled to find some one grand solution of life—so that Man and the Universe might be brought under one Government. And hitherto they have struggled in vain.

But there *is* a way in which the order of the World around us and the order of Man's life *do* coincide.

To make these two correspond *is* the only way in which Man can escape perpetual Death, remorse, and confusion.

Attachment, Reverence, Love *are*, as Christ has said, the only feelings which in the end can give us Peace.

Though no Creator crush the lawless and rebellious man and condemn him to Hell, he *is* beating himself to pieces against the Hell of an irresistible destiny.

Death has *not* the Victory. Man *can* escape the fate of the beasts that perish, and *does* become immortal in Humanity at last, not in Heaven, but on Earth.

These astonishing correlations all show us that the state of true harmony has been reached at last. They all arise from the positive study of human nature. That which unites all the powers of the Soul within is the same thing that unites man to man; it is the same thing that regulates the personal life of the man, and the collective life of society.

Religion binds, unites, regulates, *lie rallie règle*, as Comte says. The function of Religion is to *bind* within, to *unite* without, and to *regulate* alike without and within. The idea of Humanity is found to do all three:—

1. It supplies the firm voice of enlightened conscience within the soul.

2. It unites the man to his fellows and gives them all a cause and a faith in presence of the World.

3. It *regulates* the person, the society, and the earth which man's task is to improve.

In place of that Absolute Principle which the ambition of the Intellect has dreamed of for ten thousand years, a truly positive philosophy shows us that the

highest idea of Life, the essential conditions of Life, imply a sound Dualism, or Double notion.

Life simply means the continuous adjustment of the organism to its conditions.

Thus our final ideal of Human Nature is its continuous and perfect development in its true sphere—that is the Action and Reaction of—

1. Humanity, and
2. The World.

This is the issue of the secular struggle between Religion and Philosophy, Religion and Action.

Religion surrenders its ancient claim to enter into relation with the *Absolute Spirit of the Universe*. It is content with the practical work—that of adapting Man's life to its actual conditions on the planet.

Thus the conception of *Humanity* perfecting itself in the world which is its home—gives us that harmony or key to all sides of human nature, which a hundred Religions have yearned after in vain.

And remark that it is done by *Humanity* alone. Grant that Theology draws out the highest inspirations of the Heart—

Does any man pretend that Theology supplies a field for every faculty of the intelligence?

Does any pretend that it offers an object for our practical energies, for our skill, and art, and love of beauty, and industrial instinct?

What says the purest type of spiritual devotee to all this? He says, in the *Imitation of Christ*, put aside all

these vain things, this agitation of the brain, this restlessness of the character—think of things above, that perish not.

And the Bouddhist dream of annihilation, or the Confucian dream of the Sky—do these train *all* the powers; or, again, does the worship of Jupiter, and Juno, Mars and Venus, adequately train the heart, much less regulate the moral nature? Let the Epistle to the Corinthians be the answer!

Try all the Religions in turn—by this test. Do they appeal to the whole nature of Man? Does anything appeal to it but Humanity? Thus we come always back to this if we want peace for the whole Man.

If Religion has to gather up and organise Man's life it must deal equally with all parts of Man's nature, and as there are certainly three sides to this: (1) thought (2) activity, (3) feeling, Religion must have three distinct functions, for Action and Feeling are so entirely different in kind, that nothing which appeals to one can appeal to the other in the same way. Thought may exist without Activity and almost without Feeling. We may have Feeling without Thought, and Activity without Feeling.

Any scheme which is to harmonise human nature must deal with all three, and in a different set of appliances. Thus any Harmony of Man's nature implies *all these three things*:—

1. A scheme or synthesis (*i.e.*, grouping theory) as a basis of belief=A CREED.



2. A set of institutions and principles to discipline and guide action=A CODE OF CONDUCT.

3. A set of habits to cultivate the emotions and educate the heart=A CULT OR WORSHIP.

Nothing can be called really *religion* which omits any one of these three, or which gives especially to one a larger place, and starves the rest.

In their origin all forms of religion that are worthy of the name have in some sort professed to deal with all these—Belief, Conduct, Worship. Moses, Confucius, Mahomet, and the early Mediæval Church did not shrink from dealing with all that a man could know, or do, or feel, on all topics, all occasions of life alike. It may have been done in a narrow, absolute and hard way; but these various forms of religion professed to cover LIFE.

We are now so much accustomed to see Religion withdraw from all this, that we suppose Religion means—an opinion about the *origin of the world*, of the *future state after death*, and invocations occasionally addressed to the assumed author of the world and disposer of our future. That is to say: *Religion* has retired from the whole of the vast field of *thought and knowledge* except one or two metaphysical problems, in which it still asserts its prerogative. Take an ordinary encyclopædia—as a sort of rude summary of the field of knowledge—what is called Religion by theologians deals with, say, one thousandth part of it at the most; really perhaps it deals with one millionth part.

Religion has already retired from almost the whole field of activity, which it professes to affect by at most one or two general maxims.

And even in the field of Emotion and Feeling, Religion, as popularly understood, considers that its function is fulfilled by periodical hours of worship—dealing with the special feelings of adoration and prayer to a Supreme Being.

Hence, the strangely narrow sense acquired by the terms religion, worship, prayer, creed, and so forth.

The business of Positivism is to give their true breadth and depth to all these. Thus:

I. A *belief* (capable of forming the basis of life) is a coherent body of ideas on the groups and keys of our knowledge.

That is, it is a ground plan of a complete intellectual development.

It is not enough to say that God made the world and sustains it as a moral providence. That is, no doubt, one answer to a very striking problem. But it is not one thousandth part of the whole intellectual field. We need general canons of reasoning—simple, but clear, notions of the connection of the sciences, and of the typical results of each science, especially sound principles about the course of human history, and the foundation of human society and morality.

Thus a truly religious *belief* in the Positivist sense implies not only a belief about the origin of the Universe, but a thorough education.

It is asked whether Positivism therefore implies that an uneducated man cannot be in the full sense of the term religious. Well, obviously not! An illiterate and utterly ignorant man may be a most worthy and noble-hearted man. But he cannot be in the full sense of the term under the highest influence of Religion because he cannot be said to have his whole nature adequately developed. His ignorance will prevent him from understanding the grounds of duty or the nature of the world where his duty lies, and of the collective Humanity which his duty is to serve.

To a Positivist, Education in science and philosophy is, if not precisely Religion, one of the three great sides of Religion and its indispensable foundation.

And the reason is obvious. A man without trained habits of reasoning, solid knowledge of great truths, and the faculty of imagining the great ideals of Religion, is at any moment liable to be led away by crudities, his morality may be sapped by fantastic hypotheses; he will fail to seize in a vivid way the value of the great institutions and even the grandeur of the complex Providence on which his life depends.

An ignorant man may be the most fervent believer in the Theological or Positive Providence, but there is nothing to prevent him from being any day bewildered by the first spiritualist humbug he meets, or from taking up some sciolism like phrenology, "spiritualism," Christian Science, and the like; and under the influence of them he will lose his living confidence in the great insti-

tutions of existence, such as marriage, social order, and the discipline of childhood.

In Positivist religion it is not enough to be as little children. We are men and women: and the first duties of life require a solid training in the cardinal truths of human nature and of the World we live in.

II. Turn to the second great side of Religion—conduct, Principles of action. It is not enough to say the substance of religion is to be good, just, and kind, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We want to know how—since our work is certainly cast in the world—how we can keep ourselves good, just, and kind.

To say that this is the affair of morality, politics, social organisation, and not of Religion and so forth is simply to say that these: morality, politics, social organisation, etc., are to rule our life—not Religion.

A code of practical duty, a system to discipline our activity must contain principles—

(1) As to our duty in our homes, as sons, daughters, husbands and wives.

(2) Our duty in our daily tasks, as workmen, managers, producers, buyers, sellers, as citizens, rulers, etc.

(3) A scheme for making industry as beneficent as it is now often cruel, for making justice the rule of international morality instead of force.

It is for want of this—for fixed principles about our practical duties in fifty spheres of work that all our social diseases and horrors exist, in spite of lofty professions of Christianity; the barbarism of industry, the foul,

fierce scramble for wealth, the desperate recklessness of all forms of ambition.

There is but one adequate remedy—a complete scheme of practical discipline, an entire set of habits and recognised duties—not a copybook maxim or two, and a vague hope that we may do our duty in that state of life in which we were called, and so make ourselves meet for the Kingdom of Heaven.

III. Thirdly, I have spoken of Worship—How meagre is this word in its present narrow sense, to express the full meaning of what is needed. What *is* needed is—

A set of habits and institutions that will train the Heart and Feelings.

Worship nowadays is taken to be the going for an hour or two once a week to a Church or Chapel and there repeating a few well-known formulæ.

Well, this is as meagre a training for the Heart as reading one of Bacon's essays once a week would be a paltry training for the Intellect.

Both might be good things. But Worship or cult or education of the Heart implies quite a thousand times more.

(1) The habit of domestic tenderness is worship—the loving converse of son, husband, father, with parent, wife, and child.

(2) The communing with one's own mind, and reflection upon duty and work is worship.

(3)<sup>1</sup> The spiritual use of all noble poetry is worship.

(4) The communion with all noble spirits in public acts is worship.

(5) Every generous act springing from a full heart is worship.

We might as well talk of worshipping once a week, as of eating or drinking *once a week*, or leading a good life *every Sunday*.

*Cult* (worship is now an absurdly narrow term, though a noble old word) implies a continuous training of the spirit to all noble feelings: in our secret hours of inward musing, in our habitual converse with poetry and all forms of art, in our daily life towards our parents, and children, wives, servants, friends and neighbours.

It needs a thousand habits and institutions, of which that of congregational devotion is but one.

*This is the meaning of Positivist Prayer.*

Thus this scheme of Religion is really a scheme of (1) Knowledge, of (2) Practice, of (3) Feeling in the entire range of human life.

It is plain that no simple set of propositions can contain it—no single term even can express it. It is at once Philosophy and Life. No one can explain it in a Lecture, nor in fifty Lectures. It is simply *education*, and an education at once intellectual, practical, and devotional—one which it will take us years to master in understanding, and to make a habit in reality.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE JUBILEE OF AUGUSTE COMTE

IN London and in Paris his followers—1907—met to commemorate the death of Auguste Comte, on 5th Sept., 1857. This event, unnoticed at the time by men, is year by year recalled by groups of associated fellow-believers in many places in this country, in France, in Germany, and across the Atlantic. That fact is itself very striking and significant; I am not sure that it does not stand without example in modern Europe. At least, I can recall no single philosopher in this century whose life and death is being continually commemorated by growing bodies of organised adherents. Neither Bentham nor Mill, nor Carlyle or Coleridge, nor Kant or Hegel, nor Cousin or St. Simon, nor Darwin, nor Spencer have left behind them what is a real church or community, with common beliefs and institutions, to carry on their ideas and revere their memory.

And yet we must avoid any sort of exaggeration in thinking of this. From a different point of view, the numbers of Comte's adherents are few, scattered, and slowly increasing in comparison with many religious movements around us. We are continually being reminded of our scanty numbers, and asked what have we to show beside the millions of Churchmen, Catholics, Mahometans, nay Mormons, or the Salvation Army.

Assuredly we have nothing of the kind to show. The truth seems to be that Auguste Comte has left behind him an influence and a body of followers far larger and more definite than any modern philosopher; yet in every way smaller and less visible than any founder of religion, sect, or church. Happily the power of a great religious teacher or reformer is not measured by the ballot-box or the counting of heads. But it is a complete misconception to compare the work of Comte with that of any known founder of religion, sect, or church.

The very word *religion* has, in ordinary speech, so stunted and distorted a meaning that the use of it in Positivism is apt to mislead the unthinking. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, as first presented to converts, and so in later times, the Reformation, Methodism, Ritualism, and the like, appealed directly and passionately to the imagination and the feelings. They were simple, intense, overpowering ideas addressed to more or less emotional natures in ages of childlike credulity. Those who received these ideas at all took them like a violent disease, and often behaved like people smitten with disease.

There is nothing of the kind about the work of Comte. It is the essence of his scheme to address at once the reason, the character, and the emotions. His work is primarily a philosophy, and next a polity—that is, a system of methodized knowledge and afterwards a system of social life; and it is a religion in that it seeks to base a given type of social life on a regular scheme of methodized



knowledge. To reduce Positivism to a mere appeal to the personal emotions is, in fact, to reduce it to impotence. And they who think that the religion of Humanity means the mere revival of mediæval Catholicism, with the human ideal substituted for God, and Comte in the place of Pope, or the Positivist Society in place of the Church, are nursing, as I think, a ridiculous piece of self-delusion.

The real aim of Comte is far other. It is to transform society, to reform conduct, by a coherent set of doctrines, themselves subordinate to a central idea. This is a very complex task, one which appeals at once to the intellect, the character, and the heart. In an age of infinite diversity, mobility, and individual specialism it is necessarily a task of slow growth and gradual achievements. Assume the most perfect and miraculous gospel of human life ever dreamed by theological zealot, as sent direct from Divine inspiration, covering this ground and undertaking these complex tasks, and yet we know that it would only find here and there a few prepared to receive it and welcome it as a whole. There is nothing, therefore, to surprise us, if we find that the progress of Positivism is slow and feeble when compared with so many movements which appeal simply to emotions, consist of simple and plain ideas, calculated to gain an easy entrance into the hearts of the more impressionable and untrained natures.

Positivism is primarily a philosophy; and it is therefore not on the same plane with what are called the religious

movements, which appeal to ignorance, to excitability, to credulity. The influence of every philosophy is proverbially slow, necessarily slow, for its very business is to co-ordinate those ideas which for the time are disparate or incompatible, and to weld the discordant and the conflicting is obviously a slow and gradual work. All great philosophers have needed centuries to make their power felt, some of them even have had no power till the very civilisation which first produced them was itself on the wane. For centuries the influence of Aristotle himself was completely overshadowed by that of Plato and Plato's various interpreters. The century in which Bacon and Descartes lived and died had not the remotest idea of their greatness as philosophers, though in many parts of Europe their special inquiries in science were well known. During the century in which he lived Hume was regarded as a master of *belles lettres*, and Liebnitz as a mathematician or a theologian. The influence of Kant and of Hegel had hardly begun to be felt by their own contemporaries; nor for 50 years at least after the first appearance of their principal work.

Indeed, there is no surer test of the difference between the great thinker and the literary exponent of thoughts—that the latter is immediately recognised as a power, and the former is not recognised for generations, it may be for centuries. And the reason of this is obvious enough. The creator of new master-thoughts speaks to the generations about him a strange tongue,

which they do not comprehend, which revolts all their prejudices, and conflicts with their entire mental training. A new philosophy which seeks to co-ordinate the incongruous, discipline the disorderly, and reform mental habits, is by the nature of things an intruder and an usurper to the mass of men and a dangerous rival to their established teacher and guides. It is, hence, the law of human nature that a great new philosophic thinker can be no prophet in his own country and his own time. By the conditions of his existence he is at war with them and he is an alien to them.

Auguste Comte, therefore, so far as he is a great and new philosophic thinker, meets with the same law, and is subject to the same adverse conditions. So far from wondering that his influence is not already more widespread, the marvel is that a new and most daring philosophic thinker, bent on introducing system into one of the most anarchical ages in human history, who has swept away the last refuge and remnant of theological and metaphysical dreaming, the marvel is that such an one should have influence as yet at all, that his least word should be carefully studied and explained by associated students in many countries in many different languages, that the fiftieth anniversary of his death should be bringing together in many places groups of devoted friends. Such a fact in itself is almost without example in the history of philosophy. It would be inexplicable now, were Comte simply a philosopher. It was because he was much more than a philosopher—something even

greater than one of the master-intellec[t]s which have directed the mind of mankind.

Assume that this was so—that Comte was one of the great regenerators of modern philosophy, that he laid the axioms and ground-plan of social science, that he revealed to man the true central ideal towards which man had been tending for centuries, and more than this I am not at all desirous of claiming—assume that Auguste Comte was all this, and what, judging by previous examples in man's history, should we expect to find? We should expect to find the new philosophy, the new religion gradually forcing its way into those societies and centres of thought, amongst those classes of men who were best prepared to receive it, we should expect to find much opposition, much outcry, much misunderstanding, and a great deal of idle criticism and random invective; and we should expect to find a gradual reduction of this opposition and a constant convergence of opinion in the least expected quarters, and a manifest tendency to recognise the new philosophy, the new religion, as substantially falling in with the spirit of the age and as resting on fundamental truths which more and more command assent.

This is precisely what has happened. I have so often in Newton Hall and Essex Hall spoken of the general philosophy of Auguste Comte, that I will deal with Auguste Comte as a man and of the value of the example which his life has left behind him. It is now quite superfluous to insist that we in no way pretend

that the life of Auguste Comte is a perfect type, or that his character and qualities are a model of goodness for our imitation and adoration. No one can now with good faith impute to us anything of the kind. It would be wholly alien to the spirit of Positivism, a contradiction of what Comte himself taught, a retrograde imitation of the extravagant mysticism of supernatural systems of religion. We have repudiated the term of "Comtists" from the first. Comte in no sort of way is to us what Christ is to Christians, or even Mahomet to Mahometans or Buddha to Buddhists. We neither ascribe to him any ideal perfection, nor any preternatural sanctity, nor any exceptional inspiration. All such ideas are abhorrent to us and to all that we have learned from him. We recognise no kind of duty to accept him as a model for imitation, nor to take his words on any subject as conclusive and sufficient. Let us leave to theological schools all attempts to deify a teacher, even to idealise his memory, or in any way whatever to remove him from the strict sphere of the collective progress of man in intellect and in character.

There were no doubt defects and perversities about Comte's intellect, resulting, it may well be, here and there in flagrant errors or sophisms. The history of philosophy is marked by astounding blunders and enormous absurdities, many of them committed by the greatest philosophers of all. It would be contrary to human experience if the future should ultimately find that Auguste Comte was the only philosopher who had

been free from error. So, too, there were doubtless, as we can all see now, serious defects in his moral nature, and assuredly much to be regretted in his conduct—much asperity, great pride, and on one side of morality, and for one period of life a disregard of continence, as we now understand it, and as he came to understand it himself. No man has ever unveiled his inner soul with more naked simplicity or direct truthfulness than did Auguste Comte, and his memory has perhaps suffered unjustly for the unsparing faithfulness of the inner man he has revealed. Enough has been said, I think too much has been said, about the standard of sexual morality which Comte with naked truthfulness tells us was his own at one period of his life. It was a standard of morality almost universally accepted in the age and in the society in which he lived, a standard which if it fell wholly below that of every Christian ideal, whether Protestant or Catholic, was always far above that adopted by some of the greatest benefactors of mankind.

The coarseness, for it is this rather than sensuality, that certainly marked Comte's unregenerate days is liable to be exaggerated by British Pharisaism, though it is quite sufficient to warn us against any temptation to set up Comte as a model of ideal perfection. It is enough for us that every line of Comte's teaching earnestly preaches an intense, an almost hyperbolical standard of sexual purity, and of connubial delicacy, one which has often been attacked as fantastic and ex-

travagant, but which assuredly no man could ever pretend to be lax. And it is enough for us that, for the whole period of his second and regenerate life, for the whole period of his career as a religious teacher, his own life and conduct were in complete agreement with his own ultimate and lofty standard of purity, with this more than monastic standard of sexual asceticism.

The whole history of human thought contains no more pathetic picture of strenuous and unflagging labour at a great aim without a ray of popular encouragement or help. I suppose there is no example of a thinker of such eminence who during his own lifetime was so utterly abandoned and unknown. His wife, his early adherents, his literary acquaintances left him one by one. All his projects were rejected; and his writings ignored. One by one his pupils disappeared, and his official duties were taken from him. In extreme poverty, scarcely providing the bare necessities of physical life, oppressed by a concerted silence which effectually shut out his very name from his contemporaries, with not a single acquaintance who was not as poor, as powerless, and as unknown as himself, supported only by a small band of friends, whom he saw but once a week, with his wife and his earlier colleagues now become his bitter enemies, with the sole tender feeling still active in him, his memory for the dead woman whom he had loved with devotion and without sin, Auguste Comte toiled on during the whole period of his second career as a reformer of religion, without one hour of flinching, of relaxation,

or of subordinate work. Living for ten years the life of the sternest hermit, denying himself alcohol, coffee, tobacco, everything but the barest modicum of food and clothing able to maintain life, too often, it must be feared, falling below that minimum, in silence, penury, solitude, and neglect, Auguste Comte worked out his gigantic scheme of philosophy and religion, never turning aside from his task for one instant or wasting an hour in profitless controversy.

It was then that I saw him; nor can I easily forget the severe simplicity of his material existence, the intense conviction which gave him fire within, his personal courteousness and dignity, and the pure and noble spirit which he threw into all that he touched. And, not for an instant, in this long time of labour and neglect, did he ever show an hour of weakness. Never did he utter one word which was to call out public attention or conciliate the literary opposition, or seek to break the conspiracy of silence. With his eloquence, his courage, passion, and vast attainments it would have been easy to him to have forced himself on the world, to have won some immediate distinction, to have formed a party, or founded a school. With none of these would he deign to parley for an instant. Year after year his intense philosophic activity struggled on without the loss of an hour. The silent, stately, patient man kept silence even from good words, labouring with intense energy at his task, leaving it to those who might be able and willing to work out for themselves the meaning of



his abstract ideas and difficult argument, but as indifferent to immediate popularity and the approval of his age as is the oak sapling, silently stretching out its roots into the soil and its branches into the air of heaven.

For thirty-five years he continued (without one hour's interval or deviation) his intense labour of philosophic absorption, unlighted by one ray of popular fame; living day by day the same silent, methodical, laborious, self-denying life. And can men ask if it were a life of high morality, of self-devotion, of purity? Can one impute to such a man egotism, self-indulgence, vanity, or vice? Assuredly a life of such terrible martyrdom in the cause of truth, of such utter and unnatural absorption in the future, such hermit-like exclusion of all that gives ease and sweetness to man's existence, had its dangers and its evils. It is manifest to all men that the price even the greatest and the purest pay for such solitary devotion to truth is excess of passion, self-reliance pushed to the limit of arrogance. Be it so, the ideal Christ, the Saints of the Catholic Church, the Protestant heroes, the Puritans, the Quietists, the Quakers, the Covenanters, Wesley himself—all had not a little of these things. Be it so, and there stands out far above these, perhaps inevitable, shortcomings of the martyr and prophet, a clear image of dauntless courage and self-devotion to the cause of human progress.

It was a life of the most intense philosophic concentration. Not Kant in his study at Königsberg was more rigidly punctual and exact in his habits of solitary medi-

tation. Nor was Hegel more lonely when he cried, "I have but one disciple who understands me, and he misunderstands me." No Jerome or Aquinas or à-Kempis was ever more abstemious and ascetic in personal habit, weighing out his food ounce by ounce and cutting off one indulgence after another, lest by chance one grain of food might be consumed without necessity or one hour of life wasted without its product. No Pascal, or Fénelon, or Jeremy Taylor was ever more anxiously scrupulous about the inner purity of the conscience and the mysterious relation between the clear brain and the passionless sense. Nor was this anchorite's life of meditation cheered by fantastic vision of angels and saints secretly sustaining the creature in its life of trial on earth until it shortly entered into ecstatic bliss hereafter. Earth, this mortal existence of the body, the silent rest of the grave, the slow and painful improvement of the human race on earth—this was all that he had=sufficient, certain, and real, but like all else in his life, unrecognised by the opinion of the world around, resting only in his own unconquerable faith.

Nor was this man surrounded, as was Jesus of Nazareth, by thousands of eager and admiring hearers, living in a strange halo of mystical supernaturalism; nor as Socrates was, the gay comrade of all that was brightest in his city, the oracle of the market-place, and the perpetual president of a friendly club of bright spirits and noble intellects. This St. Bernard and Aquinas of the nineteenth century, this Luther of a new Reformation,

this sane and pure Rousseau of a bloodless and stormless Revolution, lived and died in a small apartment in a dingy street of Paris, almost friendless, practically unknown, absolutely unhonoured, meagrely fed, with no relaxation but his weekly visit to the Church of St. Paul and to the grave of her whom he had loved for ten months of respectful affection and occasional intercourse. I say it advisedly—the whole story of human thought contains no example of powers so vast—powers of intellect, powers of will—even by the grudging testimony of those who oppose him—powers so vast, I say, exerted incessantly to a great end and yet from birth to the grave so completely unrecognised by men, so utterly without a ray of sympathy or respect by the world around, so all but utterly buried in systematic neglect and obloquy.

Shall we do nothing to reverse this neglect of his day, we who testify to the debt we owe to his labours and to our sense of the nobleness of his teaching, shall we do nothing to reverse this cruel blindness of his contemporaries, except by coldly setting ourselves up as critics of his secret thoughts, as the fastidious judges of his life, picking and choosing suggestions of his which seem to our wisdom to be useful or true?

As I claim for Comte nothing like an ideal type of character for our imitation, so I do not claim for his teaching any abstract authority or universal supremacy. The idea of imitating Comte's life is hardly a rational idea—so exceptional, so abnormal, so intensely

characteristic a life was his, as must be that of every thinker of powers so transcendent in conditions so peculiar. That he has left to future ages splendid examples of constancy, of courage, of patience, of intense zeal is most true—but the conditions of his life and labours are not for us—and the evils of such a life for any but some exceptional genius are obvious enough, nor are we at all concerned to disguise or forget its shortcomings. Such a life as that of Comte, like the life of some Aquinas, or Descartes, Newton, or Kant, is not for us to imitate or adopt—but rather for us to dwell on with wonder and sympathy, with gratitude and reverence, in humble thankfulness to the Humanity which inspired and sustained their toils, and to whose splendour and fecundity they have each so deeply contributed.

Nor shall I be misunderstood when I ask those who consult me not to set up for critics of Comte, as empowered to pick and choose what in his writings is to them wise or foolish. I shall not be misunderstood as if I asked them to take all that Comte has written as a nineteenth century gospel, to be literally set up in practice, if only it be in a sort of working toy model. We have continually rejected such an idea as unworthy of rational Positivism, injurious to Comte's memory, and a weak imitation of theological extravagance. Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, and Hume all made manifest, astounding, inconceivable blunders—and it would be a miracle, and a very unsatisfactory miracle, if Comte had made none whatever. At the

same time many of the supposed blunders which his critics have made much of turn out, in my opinion, to be misunderstandings of the critics themselves. But for my part I am not at all convinced that it belongs to any single intellect whatever, in the nineteenth century at all events, be that intellect that of Aristotle, Descartes, Newton, and Leibnitz combined to group and co-ordinate all human science in one whole, complete and accurate in all its parts.

I am absolutely convinced that no system of science whatever—not that elaborated by the combined intellect of the whole human race—can have any finality about it, so as to dispense Humanity in the future with the duty of further developing knowledge and art. Nay, rather, the mere suggestion of such a thing fills me with loathing and antagonism as the old dry bones of dead obscurantism and superstition. What I claim for Auguste Comte is something far different. It is that at the earliest possible moment when such a thing was conceivable in the history of human thought he made a first rough sketch of the broad lines of a possible synthesis or co-ordination of knowledge. Such a sketch was absolutely impossible whilst the whole series of the social sciences were regarded as within theological or metaphysical domains—as not *in pari materiâ* with the science of the physical world. And until Auguste Comte himself instituted Sociology as a definite science, no such general idea existed in the world of thought. To Comte therefore belongs the double honour of hav-

ing instituted Sociology as a science and as having given the first rough sketch of a general co-ordination of science. In the latter his task may be compared with that of Aristotle. It was, perhaps, less difficult and less original than that of Aristotle, but also it was far more approximate to the truth. In the former, his task may be compared to that of Newton when he constituted Celestial Physics and the general theory of the solar system.

And whilst it was both more difficult and more original than the work of Newton, it was also, I think we must admit, very far less permanent and conclusive, very far less founded in true scientific demonstration. Newton *constituted* Celestial Physics, which Kepler and Galileo had *instituted*. Comte *instituted* Sociology as a science, which it remains for others hereafter to *constitute*. It is possible, as life went on, and as he dwelt on the regeneration of Science, the resuscitation of Religion, that he himself was wont to assume a certainty, perhaps a finality, about his own creation which the very axioms of Positive logic forbid. It is to me always doubtful how far Comte himself regarded his own reasonings as the outcome of scientific demonstrations, or how far he hazarded them as working hypotheses subject to ultimate verification. Perhaps he never settled that question in any definite way satisfactory to his own mind; and it may be that he was often wont to ignore the necessity of settling it some time. But to my mind, I say it without hesitation or qualification, the bulk of

the sociology of August Comte still remains working hypothesis subject to ultimate verification—almost the only hypothesis which we yet possess, and much of it, as I think, already supported by practical verification. But as that which is absolutely beyond ultimate modification, I am not myself prepared to adopt more than the ground plan and the fundamental doctrines.

It is the same, too, with the religious side of his work, with the religion of Humanity, as an organised system of discipline, education, and worship. It is to me inconceivable that such a vast regimenting of human society can have been finally composed for Humanity by one solitary intelligence in a period of less than ten years. Discipline, education, worship—these things grow by the spontaneous efforts of Humanity, working through countless organs in ways unperceived, in long succession of ages, under forms the least expected, and from beginnings the least promising. And although the conscious strivings of Humanity towards a more perfect life, on the basis of demonstrable knowledge, and by the light of a fully organised philosophy, will become more and more systematic as civilisation proceeds, the character of spontaneous growth will never, I think, be wanting to the highest manifestations of the human spirit.

To me, therefore, this splendid Utopia that Comte has given us of the religion of Humanity, systematic in all its attributes and complete in all its parts, remains an Ideal—an Ideal which every day is bringing more dis-

tinct and living to my eyes, an Ideal in which every day I see fresh meaning and new dignity, an Ideal which I shrink from criticising and would not presume to modify, an Ideal which my whole life is devoted to make *real*—but which Truth, Reason, and Conscience forbid me from mistaking for reality as it stands. Our duty is to make that Ideal real, not blindly to mistake it for reality; to fashion our hearts and conduct in the spirit in which the religion of Humanity was conceived, and not blindly to return to the superstition which of old saw inspiration in a book or a man. We have no King Log thrown down from above into our marsh which we are abjectly to serve and to obey. We have a living Power, which we have to make manifest and to comprehend.

• The details and the final conclusions of our Philosophy await, as we know, ages of human labour to complete, to verify, to modify, and to co-ordinate. The ground-plan and the dominant lines of it we know to be clear and permanent. The constitution of the church, the modes of education, the forms of worship, are yet, as we trust, to be evolved and consolidated by the enlightened conscience of generations to come. There exists no possibility of doubt about the necessity for a spiritual society wider than country, deeper than social classifications, and purer than political or material societies. The exact limits and methods of education may yet remain to work out. There is no possibility of doubting that education in the future shall be the



equal inheritance of all, shall be based on science, shall be co-extensive with the range of human knowledge, and shall be directed to the moral elevation of true men and true women. There can be no uncertainty in our belief that Worship, for the future of Humanity, can be nothing but the outpouring of our reverence, gratitude, and love for Humanity, which surrounds all that is good in our lives, and for those human beings through whose lives that working of Humanity is made real to us.

Let us not, whilst debating the precise form in which the worship of Humanity should be expressed, forget that most obvious and practical of all forms that the worship of Humanity can assume—the loving care for those near to us, to whom we owe life, or who owe their lives to us, the sympathetic consideration of all sons and daughters of men with whom we have dealings, and love, reverence, and submission towards all whom it is right to honour, respect, and obey.

And if we are ever disposed to repine or doubt when we think of the scanty numbers of those who call themselves Positivists and who outwardly profess the faith in Humanity, let us beware that we are not all the while like the Pharisee who rejoiced that he was not as other men, that we are not ignoring the real and fruitful faith in Humanity of some Sadducee who may not talk of Comte, who may never have heard of Comte, to whom the very word Positivism is unintelligible, to

whom the word Humanity means simply—a good heart and a love of doing well to others.

Positivism, in so far as it means the conscious surrender of all supernatural hopes and the frank acceptance of truth, demonstration, science, and good sense as the ultimate guides of life, Positivism in this sense is the sure and growing belief of all that is strongest and best in the people of our age. As Comte did not invent Positivism as a form of thought, but only reduced it to system, so there is a mass of Positivism on lines not at all identical with Comte's. As Comte did not discover the Religion of Humanity, but only put into organic shape the floating aspirations of his century, so there are millions who confess Humanity in ways it may be different from ours, not openly with their lips, but visibly in their lives and passionately in their hearts, and who may be far nearer it may be to the real Humanity than those who have seen Comte with their eyes, and who yearly or weekly appeal to Humanity in their services. The "service" of Humanity, the only service I much value, is a heart full of loving sympathies and a life full of humane acts.